

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)

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Annual Report 2016

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PREFACE

In 2016, sustained positive progress was shown in economic, social and cultural rights in Bangladesh, one of the key indicators of Human rights (HR). Positive improvements in the indicators related to progress in education, reduction in maternal and child death and increase in per capita income were evident and the country was progressing towards its journey towards a middle income country by 2021. Despite some positive aspects in civil and political rights, progress was limited in the other indicators of HR. Within this context, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) continued its services for the disadvantaged and advocacy for change.

The year 2016, saw violation of human rights and a total number of 195 persons were while in custody of the law enforcement authorities. The violent acts by different militant fundamentalist groups targeting members of minority groups, priests, and foreign nationals for killing and taking them in as hostages created panic among the foreign nationals and minorities. The incidence that shook the country and the international community was the attack on ex-patriates on 01 July, 2016 which killed 20 people including expatriates and 35 people were taken hostage by a group of armed militants in Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, Dhaka. Two police officers were killed and several other were injured during the operation.

Political violence resulted in deaths and injuries, and several incidents happened to restrain rallies and prevent assemblies of the opposition party. Freedom of opinion was threatened and attacks and threats on progressive political thinkers, intellectuals, writers and journalists were many. The number of cases against journalists increased by misuse of the Section 57 of the ICT (Amendment) Act, 2013. ASK filed a writ petition with the High Court in 2015 challenging the Section.

Violence against women continued including rape and gang rape, child marriage, eve teasing, torture for dowry, fatwa, acid violence, violence through social media, domestic violence, torture on domestic helps and violence in public places like transport. Violence against children and rape of small children were reported and a new issue of child safety emerged.

Punishment of the perpetrators was few and threat to victim families and their inability to access justice has become common, as the perpetrators are often connected to politically influential people. The lack of action and corruption among the law enforcement agencies makes general public hesitant to seek justice. Violation of labour rights, rights of migration, border killing, lack of witness protection etc. remained as issues of concern.

The “Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2016” was approved by the Cabinet amidst strong protests of various human rights and women organizations and media. The law though kept the minimum marriageable age for girls at 18, the age can be relaxed with the consent of High Court, and that of the parents in the “best interest” of the child. ASK together with other Human right groups condemned the move as the law may be abused and called it a “devastating step backward” as it undermined the decade-long efforts of the civil society to prevent child marriage. However, even within this context, actions against child marriage by community are increasing and especially, some of the efforts of adolescent girls were noteworthy.

Amid all the challenges, ASK remained vigilant and continued its efforts to monitor the HR situation in the country, undertaking advocacy and providing services to those who required. ASK through its programme has succeeded in raising community awareness against human rights violation and enable them to be active against such violations. ASK mobilized local cultural organizations and activist groups for advocacy and actions demanding justice and rights and raising voice against the extremist groups. Human Rights Theatre Festival was organized annually where many of national theatre personalities, HR activists, journalists were present as guests. Debate and Cultural Competitions in 48 schools of 12 districts raised awareness amongst school students on evils of child marriage and child labour and equality among men and women. Four schools have decided to create own fund to run drama activities in future.

ASK and partners engaged with local government and the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) to discuss and act against domestic violence. Through workshops with local salishkers, ASK trained them and partners

are now able to attend salishes and support victims. The CBOs, due to their enhanced knowledge, information and skills have established liaison with local administration and are capable to approach the local level state agencies to claim rights. ASK has also supported capacity building of the human rights defenders in the community as well as in other civil society groups. Training imparted by ASK for development practitioners and other interested groups on HR related topics have developed their capacity and ASK has been acclaimed for the services.

As the formal judicial system is time consuming, expensive, and even also biased against women's issues, ASK supported many complains to mediation, negotiation or ADR. Mediation and litigation services were given for 1,951 new cases and 1,808 cases from the previous years. ASK's legal advice and rapid response to HR violation cases supported victims and dower money and maintenance for wives and children were recovered. Some women initiated self-employment activities upon receipt of their dower or maintenance. Victims of 451 HR violation cases were rescued and re-integrated in their families. Victim women and children requiring emergency support were rescued and given shelter at the halfway home.

ASK has continued its advocacy with national and international networks. The organization faced some challenges like reduction on donor's support, change of the executive Director and staff turnover. Within these constraints, ASK tried to continue the services to the community.

Finally, I like to thank all my colleagues in ASK who has been always been dedicated to the cause of ASK and took relentless efforts to monitor HR situation, review progress and provide support to those who required. The support from the honourable Executive Committee and the general members of ASK was invaluable in carrying ASK's agenda forward.

Sheepa Hafiza

Executive Director

ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	: Alternative Dispute Resolution	MAP	: Manabadhikar Ainjibi Parishad
BNAD	: Biddaloy Nattya Dal (School Theatre Team)	MIS	: Management Information System
CBO	: Community Based Organization	MRRU	: Mediation and Rapid Response Unit
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of All forms of:Discrimination Against Women	NGO	: Non-Governmental Organizations
CHT	: Chittagong Hill Tracts	PCU	: Publication and Communication
CRC	: Convention on the Rights of the Child	PIL	: Public Interest Litigation
DIC	: Drop-In Centres	PNGO	: Partner Non-Governmental Organization
EC	: Executive Committee	PP	: Programme Proposal
ED	: Executive Director	PSC	: Psycho-Social Counselling
FIR	: First Information Report	PME	: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
GD	: General Diary	RBA	: Rights Based Approach
GLAF	: Government Legal Aid Fund	SOL	: Social Opinion Leader
GSJ	: Gender and Social Justice Unit	SS&HH	: Support Services and Halfway Home Unit
GT	: Guide Teacher	TA	: Transaction Analysis
HR	: Human Rights	TOT	: Training of Trainers
HRAU	: Human Rights Awareness Unit	UMNP	: Union Manabadhiker Nattya Parishad
HRDF	: Human Rights Defenders' Forum	UN	: United Nations
HRV	: Human Rights Violation	UNO	: Upazila Nirbahi Officer
MIA	: Media and International Advocacy Unit	UP	: Union Parishad
MNP	: Manabadhikar Nattya Parishad	UzMNP	: Upazila Level Manabadhiker Nattya Parishad
MNS	: Manabadhikar Nari Samaj	VAW	: Violence Against Women
MSP	: Manabadhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad		
MNS	: Manabadhikar Nari Samaj		

GLOSSARY

BNAD: Biddaloy Nattya Dal, School Theatre Team organized by ASK at district level high school. The teams perform issue based drama: facilitate competitions in debate, dance, vocal music, speeches & quizzes: produce & display a wall magazine annually.

Fatwa: Arabic for opinion of a person knowledgeable in *Sariah*. In Bangladesh villages, it is decreed by people who have no legal authority; they do not clarify an ambiguous legal situation but weigh up evidence which traditionally was never a function of a *fatwa* giver. Increasingly, *fatwas* are being used to bolster the authority of the *Salish* system. Some punitive *fatwas* have been issued against women, who were divorced, for working with NGOs or just working outside the home. Some punishments are inhuman, such as, flogging, buried up to waist and stoned to death, beating with shoe etc.

Govt. Legal Aid Fund: "Aingoto Shahayata Prodan Ain, 2000" (Free Legal Aid fund) enacted on 26 January, 2000 to provide financial support (to the extent of taka 300,000 in each district) for legal aid for people who are insolvent, distressed and are unable to bear the expenses on their own. Provides subsidies for lawyer's fees, expenses during trials and additional charges. The District Judge is the President and the Secretary of the Bar Association is the secretary of the Committee, which includes District Magistrate, Police Super, Public Prosecutor, representative of Department of Women and Child Affairs, Department of Social Welfare, local NGOs and others. Lawyers have to submit quarterly reports on their cases to the Committee.

Hilla: Intervening marriage often imposed in cases where the husband -- on an impulse -- verbally divorces the wife, repents later and wants to take her back. Although practiced in some places, it has no legal foundation in Bangladesh.

MNP: Manabadhiker Nattya Parishad, means Human rights theatre group is a group of local cultural activists who performs issue based drama voluntarily.

MSP: Manabadhikar Sangrakkhan Parishads are voluntary, human rights monitors formed under the Gender and Social Justice Programme at the union and Upzilla levels and include both men and women.

MNS: Manabadhikar Nari Samaj was formed in assistance of MSP, where especially women MSP members play a vital role in process of formation.

MAP: Manobadhikar Ainjibi Parishad, a group of lawyers formed to assist CBOs to get justice as well as initiate HR culture in their profession.

PNGOs: ASK is based in Dhaka. In order to carry out its local activities, e.g. advocacy, training, legal aid etc, it selects like-minded Partner Non-Government Organizations at the community level. ASK provides technical support, while these organizations are responsible for implementing project activities. ASK also provides training on family law, human rights, women's rights etc to these organizations' staff and group members/leaders. ASK works with PNGO with the objective to see these organizations growing up with strong human right concerns.

Salish: An informal, traditional system of mediation used to settle marital and land disputes outside the court.

Salishkar: Mediators who conduct *Salish*. Generally, local elected representative, schoolteachers, NGO workers, religious leaders, etc.

ASK- A TORCH HOLDER OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), is a national legal aid and human rights (HR) organization of Bangladesh. Established in 1986, ASK started its operation with providing free legal services to the disempowered—particularly women, working children and workers in Dhaka city, the capital of the Country. Over the years ASK has developed a comprehensive approach to the promotion and protection of legal and human rights and has transformed itself as an acclaimed human rights activist organization. ASK now operates its programme all over the country. ASK operates within a non-partisan neutral approach to protect and uphold human rights in defence of human rights without any political affiliation.

ASK is a membership based organization founded by nine individuals (4 women and 5 men, of whom 4 are deceased). Currently ASK comprises 27 general members, 17 women and 10 men. The organization is guided by a nine-member executive committee (EC), currently comprising 7 women and 2 men. The EC meets regularly to provide guidance on policy matters. The general members meet once every year.

1.1 Legal and Status

Ask is registered under:

- Societies Registration Act, 1860 since September 20, 1986
- Foreign Donations Regulation Ordinance, 1978 since June 28, 1993
- NGO Affairs Bureau, 1993

ASK has been enjoying a special consultative status with United National Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) since July 31, 1998.

1.2 Strategies and Operation

Strategies: ASK takes a comprehensive approach to make sustainable change in the HR situation of Bangladesh. The activities are designed under the following strategic categories:

- Awareness raising and strengthening organizational structures in the working areas.
- Capacity building of Human Rights Actors.
- Legal aid and other support services.
- Advocacy and networking.
- Protection of children.
- Institutional development of ASK.

Operation: The activities under the strategies are carried out by different Units of ASK. There are 14 programme Units and 4 support Units. The Units work closely with each other but carry responsibility for specialized functions. The key activities include creating human rights (HR) awareness in the public at large, facilitating the development and strengthening the capabilities of organizations in communities for identifying, investigating and protesting HR violations; monitoring law enforcement and legislative processes in the country; liaising with international HR protection organizations, including the UN HR promotion system, to create transparency about the HR situation in Bangladesh; publishing books and articles that help to shape HR perspectives on new issues and problems; and undertaking public interest litigation in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh to protect the rights of citizens and foreigners to equality under the laws.

In addition, ASK directly provides legal and mediation services to the disempowered women and children in cases of violation of their rights. The services include rescue and shelter and operating several non-formal

education centres for working children and street children in Dhaka. In brief, ASK's activities are designed in a manner to provide all-inclusive services and to make sustainable changes in HR situation in Bangladesh.

Strategies and the responsible Units: The following table provides information about the strategies and the list of Units responsible to carry out the activities.

STRATEGIES	UNITS
1. Awareness raising and strengthening organizational structures	Human Rights Awareness (HRA) Gender & Social Justice (GSJ)
2. Capacity building of Human Rights Actors	Training (TRU)
3. Legal aid and other support services	Mediation & Rapid Response (MRRU) Litigation Outreach Support Services & Half Way Home (SS&HH) Psycho-social Counselling
4. Advocacy and Networking	Investigation (INV) Documentation (DOC) Publication & Communication Legal Advocacy & Policy Reform (LAPRU) Media and International Advocacy (MIA)
5. Protection of Children	Child Rights (CRU)
6. Institutional Development	Administration (ADMIN) Accounts & Finance (ACFIN) Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (PME) Internal Audit

1.3 Partnership

ASK operates its programmes outside Dhaka through its partner NGOs, CBOs, schools and other stakeholders' forums. Currently the operation is managed through 18 NGOs and CBOs, 52 schools, and 19 Human Rights Defenders' Forum (HRDF). The support system of ASK has been presented in Annex II. In addition, ASK has liaison and partnership with international forums for advocacy.



CURRENT CHALLENGES TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH

According to ASKs' analysis of HR situation in Bangladesh for 2016, it was evident that sustained positive progress was shown in one of the two indicators of HR, that is economic, social and cultural rights. Statistics showed positive improvements in the indicators related to progress in education, reduction in maternal and child death and increase in per capita income. Bangladesh achieved 13 targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and achieved the status of a Middle-income Country (MIC) by 2015. On the other hand, progress was limited in the other indicators, that is civil and political rights. However, some positive aspects were evident in these areas as well.

2.1 Extra-judicial killing, torture and death in police custody

Extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances; deaths in police custody have emerged as serious threats to human rights in Bangladesh conducted mostly by the state agencies. The acts, not approved by the laws or judiciary are often conducted to oppress or eliminate political opponents to intimidate them or to curtail their voice of political or social dissent. At times extrajudicial killings and disappearance get public support when the acts are connected to control of crimes or to nab the criminals. The curse of extrajudicial killings was introduced by the army when they launched "Operation Clean Heart" in 2004. Since then all the concurrent governments used it in the name of combating crimes but often to suppress political opponents' voice and action. The number of deaths while in the custody of the police or other law enforcement agencies is high. Between 2004 to 2015, a total 2415 extrajudicial deaths happened of which, 1067 (about 45 per cent--- occurred while victims were in the hands of law enforcement agencies. These are serious violation of human rights and are indicative of lack of accountability and transparency, the keys of good governance. When the role of state as a protector of its citizens is compromised encourages abuse of powers vested on the law enforcement agencies. The rights of the prisoners are often ignored.

Box 1. Case Studies

1. On 03 January 2016, at around 9:30 pm, in Kingshuk Residential area in Mirpur, 2-3 policemen, accompanied by 2 police informers came to a tea-stall owned by Babul Matbar and demanded bribe. The policemen and their associates started vandalizing the shop as Babul refused to give the amount. At one point they kicked a burning stove that fell on Babul, and he immediately caught fire. On January 04, Babul died in the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.
2. On 09 January 2016 at around 11 pm, Golam Rabbi, a high official of Bangladesh Bank, was stopped by police on his way home. They accused him of carrying yaba (mad drugs) and forced him into their van. They demanded Tk. 10 lacs from Rabbi and as he refused to pay any money, they inflicted inhuman torture on him.
3. On 31 January 2016, while returning home upon finishing her classes, a female student of ASA University stopped by Sub Inspector (SI) Ratan of Adabar Police Station accompanied by a number of constables next to Shia Masjid. They accused her of carrying yaba forcing her to get off the rickshaw. They forcefully took her to an electronic shop near Japan Garden City and ordered everyone to go out from the shop. Afterwards, SI Ratan harassed the girl sexually.

Source: ASK Investigation

Table: 1 Summary of Statistics on HR Violations in 2016

Types of violence	Number
Violence against women	1624
Violence against children	1034 (Killed 465)
Political killing	177
Extra judicial killing	195
Disappearance	97 (dead body recovered 11, released after abduction 3, later RAB informed about arrest 26)
Death in jail custody	78 (under trial prisoners 46, convicted 32)
Violence against Hindu community	Destroyed and set fire in house 192, business counter 2, temple & monastery 197, statues dead 7
Journalist harassment	117
Border violence (death, tortured, injury, abduction and returned after abduction)	114 (31 killed by Indian border security force (Killed 23 by shoot, Death in physical torture 7, Type of death is not mentioned 1), Abduction 24, returned after abduction 20, Injured 39)
Imposed section 144	35 times
Mob beats to death	51

A culture of impunity has gradually developed in the country, where perpetrators can act according to their will without fear. Corruption, another devastating element has been playing a critical role against establishing rule of law and emboldens the perpetrators. ASK's investigations confirm that police demonstrate little interest in finding out the disappeared or in supporting the families. Often police act against preserving the evidences supplied by families and eye witnesses or revealed through investigation. Denial of any knowledge of the incidence or the victim's whereabouts has become a common phenomenon. The filing of written complaint of the incidence of any disappearance is also discouraged. ASK's investigations found a complex picture where corruption among the police, and arrangements with politically influenced people also play decisive roles. Not all members of the police force are corrupt, and in the current context many are frustrated at the way local political elites protect the criminals and undermine efforts to bring the murder the laws. Often the known criminals are protected under the influential local politicians. Another source of frustration for the police is the ease with which offenders can get bail from the courts.

Table: 2 Causes of Death in Extrajudicial Killings: 2004-2016

Causes of Death	Custodial	Non-Custodial	Total
"Crossfire"	769	1008	1777
Gunfire	32	467	499
Physical Torture	173	61	234
Suicide, Mob attack	16	5	21
Other (Train, Cause not unknown, Ill health. Cause unknown)	27	2	29
Total	1017	1543	2560

In 2016, a total number of 195 persons were killed in 'crossfire', 'gunfight', bullet-exchange, and in the custody of law enforcement authorities. Among them, 159 persons died in 'crossfire', 'gunfight', and 'bullet-exchange', and 10 were tortured to death in the custody of law enforcement authorities. During the year, 18 persons died during shootouts, 2 committed suicide after being arrested and 5 died of illness. Some specific cases are presented in the box below.

Furthermore, 51 died as a consequence of extrajudicial mass beating. A total of 78 people died in jail-custody out of which only 32 were prisoners, and 46 were simply in the lockup. It is to be noted here that in 2016, a total of 10 people including 2 war criminals were hanged.

2.2 Enforced Disappearance

The line separating extrajudicial killings from enforced disappearances is very thin. To disappear at the hands of the authorities means a high probability of encountering death. The High Court has made it illegal for law enforcement agencies to arrest or pick up a person in civil dress. Still, the number of such incidents increased during this year compared to the previous years. The ASK Documentation Unit found that a total of 97 people were forced to disappear, were kidnapped and killed by the law enforcement agencies in 2016. Out of them, 11 dead bodies were found, 26 were shown arrested, 3 returned to their families, and the others could not be traced. The number of such crimes was 55 in 2015.

According to the family members of the victims, the victims were picked up by people introduced themselves as members of law enforcement authorities, and since then the families of the victims had never heard from the victim. ASK found, initially, the law enforcement authorities denied of any such pick-up of any person. The victims were produced in public, handed over to a police stations or sometimes their dead bodies were found. However, these crimes do not go unpunished all the times. Three officials of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), who were accused of committing 7 murders in Narayanganj, in 2014, were arrested, and tried. The final verdict with punishment was given by Narayanganj Sessions Judge Court on January 16, 2017.

Police often try to provide credible explanations on extra judicial killings like beating by mob, shooting while

Box 2: Case studies

1. On 26 January 2016, Moazzem Hossain Topu, a Chattra League (Bangladesh Students' League, student wing of Awami League) Leader was picked up from Basundhara Residential area at around 11 pm by a group of people introducing themselves as DB Police officers. Afterwards, the family members launched general diary at the Badda Police Station and checked with different police stations, RAB offices, and the DB offices. Topu is still missing till date.
2. On May 12, Abdullah Al Saim Turjo (25) from an area next to a mosque in Chhoto Boira, Monirul Islam (28) and Md. Soaib Baikal Bazar were arrested by DB Police Officers between 6:30 to 9:30 pm. One of the two families of the two victims filed a case and the other did a general diary with the concerned police station. The three persons were shown arrested in Jatrabari Police Station and produced before court for trial.

Sources: News published in Daily newspapers and ASK Investigation

Table: 3 Enforced Disappearances: 2015-2016

	2015	2016	Total
Never traced & presumed dead	35	57	92
Traced but found dead	8	11	19
Traced but shown under arrest	7	26	33
Returned to family	5	3	8
TOTAL	55	97	152

Box 3: case Studies

1. On 15 June 2016, three unidentified bodies were found under a Banyan tree in Bangabandhu Park, near the river Kapatakkha in a place called Katakhal of the village Krishnanagar under Jhikargachha Police Station of Jessore district. Jhikargachha Police Station claimed that these three people whose dead bodies were found were suspected as robbers and beaten to death by the local mobs. The people of neighbouring areas informed the ASK investigation team that there had not been any incident of beating in the place in question. The family members of the three victims said that the victims had been missing for a few days.
2. As per the news published in different dailies, in the night of 03 December 2016, three young men namely Abudullah Akand (28), Redowan Sabbir (26), and Sohel Rana (27) were picked up on a microbus from a tea-stall in an intersection called Tokia Mor of Natore district by 10-12 people who introduced themselves as RAB Officers. Their dead bodies were found on 05 December 2016 next to Kopapara Road in the sub-district of Ghoraghat of the district of Dinajpur.

Sources: News published in Daily newspapers and ASK Investigation

the perpetrator (often a victim) tried to escape and so on. Recently, train accidents” have begun to appear as causes of deaths. Some of the explanations are found questionable. Investigations by ASK has found that many of the deaths by crossfire are due to planned action by law enforcing agencies. The explanations often are repetitious, and lack credibility. The stories are around, i. the victim was arrested or picked up for questioning for their suspected involvement in crime like robbery, extortion, using lethal weapons or carrying bombs, ii. the victim confessed to the alleged crime(s) and agreed to lead law enforcement to co-conspirators, and iii. upon seeing the police/authorities, the latter opened fire on them. In the process, the victim was struck by a bullet unintentionally and died. Some of abductions and killings are due to political motivation. Deaths after disappearance is especially true of families of political activists of the opposition groups. When all possible avenues of getting the loved ones back, the families check out the morgues, where the remains of a large number of the missing are found with signs of torture or bullet wounds.

2.3 Political Violence and the Law and Order Situation

In 2016, the law and order situation of the country deteriorated as different militant fundamentalist groups targeted members of indigenous community, religious minority groups, foreign nationals for killing, taking them in as hostages, launching suicidal attacks and arsons. Deaths were also induced by election violence and clashes between different political parties or internal clashes between factions of the same party.

Box 4: Case of Holey Artisan Bakery

On 01 July, 2016, a total number of 35 people were taken hostage by a group of armed militants in Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, Dhaka. The militants killed 17 foreign nationals, 2 Bangladeshi nationals, 1 Bangladeshi-born American, and 20 other people with unfathomable atrocity. In an attempt to resist the attack two police officers were killed, and several others got injured. Later, in an operation launched by the joint force of Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Army, 5 militants, one chef of the Bakery, who was also a suspect, died. On July 08, Zakir Hossain Shaon, an assistant to the suspected chef died on in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On the political front, a total of 907 incidents of political violence took place in 2016. These incidents resulted in 177 deaths and 11,462 injuries, which were higher compared to the number of incidents and casualties occurred in 2015. The incident that drew attention of the international community was the killing of foreign nationals at the Holey Artisan bakery.

Within a week after the Gulshan attack, on 07 July, on the Eid day, another attack was launched on the members of police on duty as bombs were exploded in the biggest Eid congregation in Sholakia in the district of Kishoreganj. Two police constables were killed in this incident. During the gunfight, a member of the militant group named Abir Rahman, and a local inhabitant named Jharna Rani Bhowmik were killed.

Following the Gulshan and Sholakia attack, the law enforcement agencies strengthened the search for militant hideouts. Police raids in Kalyanpur, Mirpur, and Azimpur of Dhaka; Paikpara of Narayanganj; Harinal, Poshchimpara, and Lebu Bagan in Noagaon; and Patartek of Gajipur; Kagmara, and Mirjamath of Tangail; and Ashkona, Dhaka led to a number of casualties and arrests. The ninth Union Parishad (UP) election took place amongst wide-spread chaos and violence resulting in 147 deaths, the highest-ever number during any UP election.

One of the rivals to the winning candidate of Bangladesh Awami League, who himself also was a candidate of Alwami League, terrorized people for voting for the party at Nouka (boat), the election symbol for Bangladesh Awami League. As a result, 100 families in 4 different villages of Ashashuni of Satkhira district were evicted out of their houses.

ASK's role

ASK monitors and investigates the incidents of the extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other violence. Monitoring is done mainly through scanning of media by the Documentation Unit of ASK for information about human rights violations. Besides, ASK's partners and network of friends in the districts and remote corners of the country are sources of information. ASK conducts protests, lunches advocacy campaigns at the national level, and appeals for remedial action to the relevant agencies. Ask also draws attention of both national and international communities through statements to the press, conferences, discussions and publication of articles in ASK Bulletin and other newspapers and journals.

Not only the HR violence by the State, ASK's monitoring focuses on the violation of rights of children, women, people of minority communities and the media. ASK also attends to the violation of labour rights in industrial sector and of the migrant labourers.

ASK is convinced that community participation and action are critical to increasing the capabilities of communities for recognizing threats to HR and effectively defending those rights. Accordingly, ASK works for raising awareness within communities and the Investigation Unit supports the formation of Human Rights Defenders Forums (HRDFs) at the district level. ASK also provides information and training to the members of the forums to develop skills in monitoring, investigating, reporting on human rights violations, advocacy, and community mobilization.

2.4 Violence against Women

Violence against women continues to be in an alarming state, despite many initiatives taken by both government and non-government organizations. The year 2016 also witnessed different forms of violence against women that include, child marriage, eve teasing, torture for dowry, torture through fatwa (extra-judicial village court that often punishes women unlawfully), rape, hurling of acid, domestic violence, torture on domestic helps etc.

The people of the country are still tolerant of VAW. Due to the social stigma attached to reporting of violence, women tend not to report on such incidences. Yet, the number of reported cases set an alarm for the HR activists. Despite filing of cases against the accused on rape, torture and other types of violence against women, in most cases, the accused go unpunished. The phenomenon of forcing the victims and their families to reconcile by threat has become common. Some members of the law enforcement agencies are also of traditional mindset and some also take a lenient view towards the offence and offenders. Therefore, the enforcement of the laws and policies remains a major challenge. Government resources are limited to provide shelter and legal support to all victims.

Rape, gang rape and killing after rape

The year 2016 saw rape, killing after rape and gang rape. A total of 724 women were raped, 37 were killed after rape, and 08 committed suicide due to rape. As a result of awareness raising, it is also evident that more cases are reported. Children are also not spared from violence and torture often due to dispute and rivalry between families. A five-year old girl went missing from her house on 18 October 2016. She was found unconscious in a turmeric field next to her house on the next day. She was immediately taken to a local hospital. The child was so dreadfully abused that the doctors were utterly shocked to see her condition. As her condition was not improving, the local doctors arranged and sent to Dhaka Medical College hospital. Gang rape and rape in public places were also reported. A 23 year old ready made garment factory worker was raped by the driver 'Nayan' and his 2 assistants on April 1, 2016 in the 'Binimoy Paribahan' bus, which was heading for Dhaka from Modhupur's Dhanbarhi, Tangail. Local people rescued her after the perpetrators threw her off the bus on the Modhupur-Mymensingh road. She was admitted to Tangail Medical College Hospital for medical examination. Two sisters were also allegedly gang-raped at night in Lakshmipur's Kamalnagar after being dragged to an abandoned house by five men on March 29, 2016.

Table: 4 Summary of Incidences on VAW

Types of Violence	Number
Domestic violence	394 (Killed 270)
Domestic worker violence	64 (Suicide 5, Killed 7, Unnatural death 27)
Rape	724 (Death 37, Suicide 8)
Acid violence	34 (Death 1)
Sexual Harassment (Stalker)	156 (Suicide 6)
Dowry related violence	239 (Killed 126, Suicide 4)
Salish & Fatwa	12 (Suicide 1)

Box 5: Case Study

On 20 March, the dead body of a college student called Tonu was discovered from a jungle in Moynamoti Cantonment. The incident created a huge furore and triggered vehement public protests on media and on various social networking sites. Even after the second autopsy, it was not known whether Tonu was raped before she was murdered. This is still an unresolved issue as the killers have not yet been identified.

Stalking, Sexual Harassment and Torture

Several incidents of sexual harassment by local goons in various educational institutions, and workplaces were reported during the year. A total of 244 women were subjected to different forms of sexual harassment and brutal violence. Out of the 244 victims, 6 women committed suicide and 5 girls had to stop going to school to avoid sexual harassment. Those who protested had to suffer violence as well. A total of 14 people, 7 men and 7 women were murdered for protesting harassment of women and 138 women were insulted for their protest. The crime is also often committed by the children or followers of the local politically influenced people. Eve teasing and violence due to not accepting proposal for love affairs among the young people has become common.

On 03 October, Khadija, a student of Sylhet MC College was hacked by one Badrul, a terrorist leader of the student wing of Awami League, while Khadija was returning home upon finishing her B.A. examination. She was hospitalized for 57 days in Dhaka and the Prime Minister ordered special care for her treatment. The accused was arrested. Suraiya Aktar Risha, a student of Wills Little Flower School, Dhaka was stabbed by a derailed youth named Obaidul Khan for not accepting his love proposal. Rishadied after 4 days from taking her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later the accused was arrested. Shahnaz, a 7th grader girl student and daughter of a day labourer, of village Nalbhangra in Kaliganj upazilla of Jheniadhah district was eve-teased. Her father protested and was beaten by the goons on 16 October 2016. The beating left him wounded and he was admitted into the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Dhaka, and his both legs had to be amputated.

Fatwa and Salish

Fatwa and Salish are extra-judicial measures, where often victims particularly women are punished despite having no legal provision for such actions. Despite the High Court's order against imposing any punishment in Salish, violation is frequent, and practice of imposing punishment continues. ASK found, 12 women were tortured in the name of fatwa and Salish and in 4 of these cases, women were evicted out of their houses, and condemned socially. In 5 of these cases, women were physically tortured and only three cases were filed in police stations.

Acid violence, Dowry, Torture within family and torture of the domestic helps

Acid violence, torture for dowry and torture on domestic helps are other forms of violence against women. ASK found that not all cases are reported and cases filed. In 2016, the number of incidents pertaining to acid throwing was less compared to that of previous years, the reason, as analyses reveal that punishment for acid throwing is severe and the perpetrators being aware of that has started using kerosene for burning the victims instead of using acids. A total of 34 women became victims of acid throwing, and consequently one died but only 12 cases were filed. As for dowry, 239 women were tortured, and only 95 cases were filed. A total of 394 women were the victims of torture within family, but only 187 cases were filed.

Torture of domestic helps often also go unreported unless it reaches to a severe extent. In 2016, 64 housemaids were tortured, but only 32 cases were filed. Domestic helps are often subject to deprivation of food and healthcare services and are low paid and subject to verbal and physical abuse and torture. Physical tortures of the workers are to be dealt with seriously.

Box 6: Case studies

1. In the village Kamalprotap, of Bashgram union of Norail district a housewife was brought for salish (arbitration) on 26 October 2016 by the members of the UP and the locally influential people as rumours spread about her being involved in immoral activities. The Salish ordered torture, cutting of the hair of the victim and imposed a fine of 50,000 Taka.
2. On 16 October 2016, in the village Charshavikalri of Shonagaji upazilla of Feni district, the Chairman of Charnashi UP hacked off the hair of the wife of a person living abroad in the presence of thousands of people and, she was forced to wear shoes around her neck and walk around the village.
3. On October 29, in the village of Mahmudpur under Mathura Union of Badalgachhi upazilla of Naogaon district, a woman called Champa Parveen and her mother were brutally beaten up by the Chairman of the local Union Parisad and his associates and were tied up to a tree.

2.5 Attack on the Religious Minorities

The year 2016 witnessed an increased number of incidents of inhuman torture, and killing of the minorities that included Hindu priests, temple servers, Christians, and Buddhists. According to the ASK Documentation Unit, in 2016, 7 Hindus, and 2 Christians from different parts of the country were killed. Moreover, 194 houses, and shops, and 197 temples and idols were vandalized.

In some cases, Islamic State (IS), and the international terrorist organization accepted the responsibility of attacks though the Government denied of the existence of ISs in the country.

A Hindu temple server Shyamananda Das (01 July) was collecting flowers for

his temple when three miscreants came on a motorcycle and left him critically injured by hacking him mercilessly. As the local people took him to the city hospital, the duty doctor declared him dead. In some cases, outcry about insulting Islam through the social media was used as ground for vandalizing, looting and arson on minority religious and personal infrastructures. On 30 October, in the Harinber village under Nasirnagar town of Brahmanbaria district, a huge outcry broke out over some pictures posted on facebook, claiming that they were intended to insult Islam. Following the commotion, 15 temples were vandalized, 50 houses were attacked, destroyed, looted and set on fire. Later, even in the presence of police, temples and houses were set on fire three times. On May 29, after the UP election of Khuruskul Union, the supporters of the defeated candidate vandalized more than a hundred houses of the Hindus, their temples, and beat up 30 men and women. Furthermore, there were newspaper reports on similar attacks, torture and destructive activities that had taken place in Barisal, Jhalokathi, Pirojpur, Tangail, Sirajganj, Thakurgaon, Bagerhat, Jessore, Mymensing, Netrokona, Habiganj, and in other parts of the country.

ASK wrote a writ petition to the High Court requesting necessary instructions from the Court to deal with such situations in order to protect the minorities of the country.

2.6 Child Abuse and Child Marriage

Child marriage

Bangladesh is one of the countries having the highest rate of child marriage in Asia. Currently 52% of Bangladesh's women are married by the time they're 18, according to UNICEF's 2016 State of the World's Children report. Of those, 18% are married by the time they turn 15, one of the highest rates in the world. According to a recent estimate, 39% of Bangladeshi girls are married before they are 15, and 74% before they are 18.

Despite strong protests of various organizations for women empowerment, and human rights, "Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2016" was passed in the cabinet. According to this law, though the minimum marriageable age for girls was kept 18, the age could be relaxed with the consent of High Court, and that of the parents of the child for the "best interest of the people concerned". The Law was passed in March 2017, without explanation of the "best interest" or special circumstances, which allows the exceptions and girls can be married off under undefined special circumstances by their parents. No minimum age is specified when these special considerations can apply. ASK together with other Human right groups condemned the move as it may be abused, calling it a "devastating step backward for the fight against child marriage" as it will give legitimacy to child marriage. This undermines the decade-long efforts of the HR group to prevent child marriage.

The people in communities are well-aware of the legal age of marriage, which is often violated showing different reasons. Still marriage of adolescent girls is viewed as a means of protecting them. The above

Box 7: Some of the people who were hacked, and slit to death in 2016 with dates

1. *Samir Ali, a 82 year old Muslim converted from Christianity, (07 January),*
2. *Jogeshhor Roy, Principal of the Gauri Temple in Deviganj of Panchagar (21 Feb.),*
3. *Paramananada, 70year old priest (24 April),*
4. *a resident of Tungipara, Gopalganj,*
5. *Nikhil Joarder, a tailor (30 April),*
6. *Christian businessman, Suneel Gomez, a resident in the Borai village of Natore (05 June),*
7. *Ananda Gopal Ganguly, a Hindu priest of Mohisherbhagar of Naldanga union in Jhenidah district (07 June),*
8. *Nityaranjan Pandey a server in the Sri SriAnukul Chandra Shatshongo temple of the village Hemayetpur of Pabna district (10 June),*
9. *Ripon Ckarabarty, Lecturer of Mathematics of Govt. Najimuddin College of the district of Madaripur (15 June), and Narasundar Haridas in Bogra. (03 September)*

provision of the new law will encourage child marriage, the human right thinkers fear. However, examples of stopping child marriage by community are increasing day by day.

Child abuse

Child abuse has been an emerging phenomenon and the degree and atrocity of child abuse did not change much in 2016 compared to those of the previous years. ASK's Documentation Unit found, 415 children were murdered, 22 committed suicide, and 28 children died mysteriously in 2016. Only a total of 176 cases were filed in this regard. As for mental and physical torture, rape, sexual harassment, and eve-teasing, 1,034 incidents took place, but only 260 cases were filed. Pumping air through rectum has emerged as new way of torture and killing particularly for male child labourers.

Table: 5 Incidents of Violence Against Children by Type, 2016

Types of Incidence	Number
Suicide & Murder	437
Suicide	58
Murder	379
Assault	565
Sexual Harassment & Rape	388
Sexual Harassment	108
Rape	280
Trafficking	1
Missing and Abducted	76
Explosives: Injury from	3
Total	1470

Box 8: Case Studies

1. *Shagar, a child labourer of Ekhlash Spinning Mill of Rupganj in Narayanganj district was rescued unconscious with an inflated belly on 24 July, 2016. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and was declared dead. His family complained that air was pumped into the boy's rectum, and he died as a result. The father of Sagar filed a murder case in Rupganj police station.*
2. *Saddam Arun, a helper in Meghna Automobile Workshop near Laltola Bazar, Katasur, Mohammedpur was beaten mercilessly by the younger brother of the workshop owner on 31 August. The person together with other workers, pressed compressor machine pipe into Arun's rectum. After being brutally tortured and consequently senseless Arun was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.*
3. *In Shundarganj of Gaibandha, a ruling party member of the parliament (MP) named Manzurul Islam shot a fourth grader boy Saurav, and a case was filed on 02 October 2015. The associates of the MP put pressure on Saurav's family to withdraw the case. On 10 February 2016, Saju Mia, father of Saurav complained that the associates of the MP took him to a house and forced him to sign on a non-judicial stamp, before releasing him.*

2.7 Rights to Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech is a constitutional right, which was grossly violated this year like the previous years. There were allegations of government surveillance on different social networking sites seriously impeding the exercise of freedom of speech. Moreover, different repressive measures of the government, and various heinous activities of different fundamentalist groups deteriorated the situation. Political rallies and meetings of the opposition parties were often not allowed.

At different times of the year, there were attacks on progressive political thinkers, renowned intellectuals, and writers, and some of them were also murdered. Professor Anu Muhammad, Member Secretary of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Ports; writer Moinul Ahsan Sabir; and poet Imtiaz Mahmud received death threats through messages sent to their mobile phones.

Nazimuddin, a student of Jagannath University was hacked to death in the night of 06 April 2016, in Laxmibazar of the Old Dhaka area, due to his writing on his facebook page on extreme religious fundamentalism. AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiqui, a teacher of the University of Rajshahi, was killed by slitting his throat on 23 April. One of the attackers was nabbed by the local mob, while fleeing. Upon arrest, he was produced in court and was put to remand. In less than 24 hours into the interrogation in remand, he was shown dead in a 'shootout' with police.

Torture on Journalists

ASK's investigation found that in 2016, a total of 117 journalists were tortured physically, sued against, abducted, attacked, received death threats, and suffered various other forms of harassments committed by the law enforcement authorities. In most of the cases, the journalists were subjected to torture, arrest and court cases due to raising their voice against irregularities in election, violation of human rights, destruction of public property. At times they are shown arrested under other different forms of crimes.

On 31 March, a local representative of NTV, Afzal Hossain, prepared a report on various irregularities of the election centre of No. 02 Rajapur Govt. Primary

School in Rajapur union of Bhola district. At one point, a police constable shot Afzal Hossain under his left knee at a distance of 2-3 feet. On 23 December, in Ashulia of Dhaka, Police arrested Nazmul Hooda, a local representative of News24 Channel on the ground of provoking garment workers to demand pay raise. Police filed a case against him under information technology law in Ashulia Police Station.

On 18 December, Neerob Chowdhury, a photojournalist of the Daily ProthomAlo working in Khagrachhari, was taking pictures of illegal sand lifting in the Rjyamuni area next to the Chengi river when Didar, an associate of the local City Mayor Rafiqul Alam, abducted Neerob on a motor bike, and took him to the City Office. The City Mayor falsely accused Neerob of extortion and beat him up. Finally, they forced him to write a commitment note, and let him go.

Box 9: Case Study

1. *In February, 79 cases were filed in different districts including Dhaka against the Editor of The Daily Star, one of the top dailies of the country on the ground of treason and defamation in the courts. ASK and different humanitarian organizations at home and abroad, leading journalists, and civil society intellectuals observed the legal actions against Mahfuz Anam as reflection of the misuse of power for mean political gains.*
2. *Senior journalist, Shafiq Rehman was arrested from his house in Eskaton on 16 April by Detective Branch (DB) Police under the guise of journalists from a private TV channel, Baishakhi. Initially, DB had denied the act of arrest, but later admitted it. Mr Rehman was alleged for a planned kidnap, and killing of Shajib Wajed Joy, the son of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.*

2.8 Restrictions on Freedom of Association and Assembly

Right to organization, assemble and participate in public meetings and processions are rights provided by the Constitution. Yet during the year, the government's attempts to prevent people from exercising their rights was observed at various times in 2016. The main opposition BNP did not get permission to hold meetings on several dates during the year. The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Ports brought out a procession in July marching towards the Prime Minister's Office to demand the cancellation of the contract between the Governments of Bangladesh and India for establishing a power plant in Rampal, near the Sunderbans and seven other points. The procession was obstructed by police at Bangla Motor, Dhaka. Police used tear gas and charged baton on the procession and about 50 people were wounded.

2.9 Border Killing and Torture

As in other years, killing at the borders continued and the Border Security Force (BSF) of India killed many people. Though as per agreement, both countries are committed to stop all killings in the border areas. In reality, such killing never stopped. If anyone tried to cross the Indian border (often illegally), BSF nab them, torture them or shot them dead, instead of handing them over to law enforcement authorities. Entering of the BSF members in Bangladesh unlawfully also happened. They tortured and killed people and also looted their valuables, completely violating the international laws. Moreover, while a meeting between the Directors of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) was taking place in Dhaka from 11 to 16 May, a school student in Chuadanga was shot dead by BSF. ASKs investigation and news scanning found that 23 people were shot dead, 7 underwent corporal torture, and 39 were wounded. Moreover, 24 Bangladeshi citizens were abducted from the border.

2.10 Labour Rights

The rights provided by the policy, law and rules related to labourers are often violated. In 2016, many labourers died due to lack of occupational health and safety measures. The incidences include fire in factories, collapsing of buildings that led to many deaths, and severe injury of the labourers. According to the

statistics of a report of Bangladesh Occupational Safety Environment (OSE), 1,240 labourers died at work in 2016. Non-payment of salary and benefits in time and before the festivals has become a common phenomenon and many a times labourers were tortured while demanding their salaries and festival bonuses in time of Eid.

The biggest of all incidents in 2016 took place in plastic and packaging factory called Tampaco Foils Limited in Tongi BSCIC Industrial area of Gazipur district. On 10 September 2016, a total of 39 people including the labourers, and security guards of the factory as well as passers-by received serious injury because of a big explosion inside the factory followed by it catching fire. Meanwhile, on 22 November, in Jirabo area of Ashulia, an unlawfully established factory that manufactured gas lighter named Color BD Match caught fire too. A total number of 26 labourers got burnt and received serious injuries. Five of the injured died in the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College during treatment.

Box 10: Case study

A sensational case was filed in 2015 against the former national cricketer Shahadat Hossain and his wife for torturing their domestic help aged 11 years who was found lying injured on a road in Sangbadik Colony area of Pallabi in Dhaka city. A journalist filed a case against Shahadat and his wife with Mirpur Model Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act-2000. But both of them were acquitted in November 2016.



Workers are far away from a safe and secured working environment.

Domestic worker

The working hours, salaries and benefits of the domestic workers are to be according to the provision of the labour laws but is violated grossly. The Domestic Help Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015 provides that no one below 14 years should be employed as a domestic worker, which is often violated. Torture and inhuman behaviour with domestic helps, especially the minor ones continue. Even if cases are filed, in many of the cases, the accused go unpunished on the ground of lack of evidence.

Migrant labourers

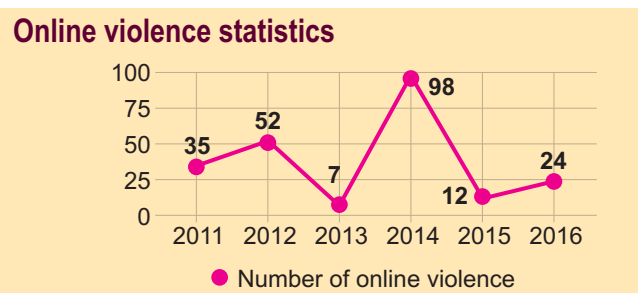
Labour migration in Bangladesh is not a new phenomenon. Each year, more than 400,000 workers leave the Bangladesh for overseas employment. Despite the Government's positive initiative to prevent illegal migration, it has not stopped. The rights of the migrant labourers are violated by the recruitment agencies, employers abroad and middle men. As a result, aspirant migrants end up in jail, inhuman jobs or in job conditions that violate human rights. Low wages, lack of information on migration opportunities and risks;

discrimination, exploitation and abuse while overseas; and insufficient services to protect the rights of workers are common. Female migrant workers face difficulties and torture including violence and rape in destination countries. News about mass investigation and arrest in Malaysia, sending people by boat to Thailand by recruiters tell horrifying stories. However, the Government has not been able to come to any effective terms with the recruiting countries, to ensure protection and decent employment conditions to the Bangladeshi migrant workers. Due to the inability to the overall management of labour migration, the recruiters also go unpunished in the country. Human trafficking, particularly trafficking in women and children happen while they tend to migrate for work.

At different times of the year, news were published on migrant labourers suffering from harassment, torture, and in many cases, they were deprived of their due salaries. On many occasions, it was observed that labourers died due to various accidents or torture inflicted on them. Incidents of arrest of migrant labourers who were victims of cheating and exploitation of recruiters were also reported. Meanwhile, with the slogan “Immigration for all for sustainable development”, the 9th international convention of Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) took place in Dhaka from 10 to 12 December 2016.

2.11 Online Sexual Abuse and pornography

Within the development of the new landscape of Information and Communication and Technology (ICT) a new form of human rights violation has emerged. Online threat, sexual abuse and pornography have emerged as threat. Harassment by spreading private pictures of girls through social media has also been seen. Often social media is used for such crimes.



Source: Documentation Unit, ASK (Collected from daily 9 newspapers)

2.12 Rights of the Indigenous People

In 2016, there were many complains of attack on indigenous people, vandalization of their properties, setting fire on their houses, harassment, grabbing of their land, and uprooting them from their places. On 06 November, in Shahibganj-Bagdafarm of the district of Gaibandha, 3 Santal, an indigenous group of people, died during a conflict. Their houses were set on fire, and they were attacked and forced to evacuate. According to an ASK investigation, it came to light that on 10 December, a violent conflict erupted between the police and the sugar mill workers and the Santals in a sugarcane field. At one point, the sugar mill workers, and the police drove out the Santals, took over their houses and set fire on them. During the time of the conflict, a few members of police, and 10-15 Santals were wounded. Many of the wounded Santals were shot, and later 3 of them died. Police filed a case as a complainant. In the case 42 Santals were accused by name and 300/400 were accused anonymously. Police arrested four of the injured Santals from the hospital where they had been admitted for treatment. Moreover, police established camps around the sugarcane field, and prevented the Santals from entering it. The following day, on 7 November, a group of miscreants launched an attack on the Santals of the neighbouring villages namely Madarpur and Jaipur, and looted their cows, goats, chickens, ducks and husbandries. ASK, ALRD, and Broti, these three human rights organizations filed a petition against it to the High Court.

2.13 Other Issues

Insecurity of victim witness

Many of the crimes go unpunished due to not having witnesses, despite filing of cases. In the recent years, threat to the witnesses has become common. In many cases the perpetrators after receiving bails threat the victims' families and witnesses and at times torture them. Even at times the threat and torture is done through the family or friends even while the accused is in custody. Often these people are those who are politically connected. The witnesses of the case related to crime against humanity in committed in 1971 are being protected by the state. Such security is not available for all witnesses. These extra security measures have also become burden hindering the regular livelihood activities of some of those witnesses.

Foreign Donation Regulation Act

The Parliament passed the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Bill 2016 on October 2016. The human rights organizations observed that the Bill undermines the role of civil society and further restricts

the work space for human rights NGOs. It includes provision that any foreign funded NGO found to be engaged in anti-state activities and finances extremism and terror activities, or "making derogatory comments about the Constitution and constitutional institutions" would be considered as offences. The NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) under the Prime Minister's Office is authorized to cancel or withhold the registration of such NGOs or ban their activities. ASK, along with other organizations has protested and urged the Government not to enact the Bill into Laws. Critiques find that the Act has failed to address the concerns earlier raised by the civil society organizations, rather it might hamper the regular operation of NGO activities.

Abuse of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Act

The Senior Editors and the journalist community have raised their concern over the misuse of the Section 57 of the ICT Act. The Section 57 of the ICT (Amendment) Act, 2013 allows punishment of 7 to 14 year jail for publication of materials that causes to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the state or person or causes to hurt religious belief. A writ petition was filed with the High Court in 2015 challenging the legality of the Section. Despite the Law Ministers' assurance of amendment as per the suggestions of the journalist community, the Section continues and the number of cases against journalists increasing day by day. As of 2016 the number of cases were above 340, which was about 50 in 2015. Most of the journalists were sued for the news reporting. The Senior editors observed that a self-censorship has been imposed by all media due to fear of violation of this Section, which eventually curtails freedom of expression and objective reporting.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the year 2016, Bangladesh has seen a series of violation of human rights. In some cases, the violations were not like the previous years rather new forms of extreme human rights violation have emerged. Particularly, forms of child abuse, violence against women, attacks on different religious and ethnic minority were different from that of the other years. On the other hand, corruption, lack of action or at times connivance of law enforcement agencies have been found or their actions have been questionable.

For the development of the country promoting democracy and human rights require action from all concerns. Democracy and inclusive human development demands good governance, rule of law and access to justice by all. The state and its machinery need to act as protector of the citizens and ensure access to justice by all, which was not evident in many instances.

ASK'S WORK AND ACHIEVEMENT

ASK started implementation of the current phase of programme titled “Strengthening Activism Towards Human Rights Culture in Bangladesh” from January 2012 for a period of 5 years. Overall aim of the programme was to contribute to the establishment of a non-discriminatory and democratic society where dignity, fundamental freedoms and rights of all citizens are guaranteed in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Constitution of Bangladesh. This report focuses on the progress of the fifth year (2016) of the above-mentioned period and a summary of the overall progress. The following section compiles the achievements based on the data from ASK's Dhaka and field based programme, case studies, fact findings as well as by scanning news of human rights violations from leading national dailies. The overall objective of the programme was to significantly improve the human rights situation in Bangladesh. The activities and achievements of each of the Units are presented below.

3.1 Awareness raising and strengthening organizational structures

3.1.1 Human Rights Awareness (HRA)

One of the key obstacles to ensure protection of human rights in Bangladesh is a general lack of awareness among the public about their legal and human rights. The ignorance about human and personal legal and constitutional rights makes the individuals vulnerable to exploitation, torture and limits their ability to access justice. Due to ignorance as well as wrong understanding, they become subject to violence by state and non-state actors. Victims often lack knowledge and information about where and how to approach for remedies or justice while even they realize that their rights have been violated. The costly and cumbersome legal procedures also discourage people from seeking justice. The efforts for dissemination of legal and fundamental rights among the citizens are almost absent. In the recent years, laws and policies are uploaded in the web-sides of the ministries and departments but the general public, particularly the poor and illiterate do not have access to those sources. ASK considers that creating awareness and mobilizing public opinion and action for prevention and seeking redresses in case of human rights violation are critical. Therefore, ASK's strategy is to develop community awareness about the legal and human rights of people and different groups including women, children and indigenous people. ASK seeks to promote a culture of tolerance for political and cultural diversity, and to demand good governance and social justice by advancing a human rights discourse in the community as well as with the state.

The Human Rights Awareness (HRA) Unit organizes events involving participants from grassroots communities to state institutions such as youth, community leaders, cultural activists, journalists, teachers and students. It uses theatre and socio-cultural activities, such as, debate competitions, publishing wall magazines, etc. as awareness raising tools.

Achievements

Protests against HR violations increased

ASK organized Manabadhikar Nattaya Parishad (MNP) in 13 districts including in Dhaka city where local youth, students and community people are involved. Similarly, and Biddalaya Natta Dall (BNAD) are organized in 45 schools out of the 52 schools where ASK is working in 13 districts. They are trained to write scripts and perform dramas highlighting the contemporary incidences and issues of HR violence in the locality. They are also trained on conducting advocacy and protest events to condemn the extra judicial killing, target killing, rape and murder and violence against women. MNPs and BNAD mobilized local cultural organizations and activist groups to join their efforts through drama, songs and human chain for advocacy and demanding visible strong actions from the Government to uphold the constitutional rights and against the extremist groups. Hundreds of people participated in those events and expressed their solidarity with the demand.



Protest and human chain against sexual harassment & rape by MNP, Mymensing



Wall Magazine Festival in Dhaka

Theatre for HR

Issue based drama were performed by the MNPs and BNADs in 13 districts to raise awareness among public. The topics included unsafe migration, violence against minorities, target killing, political violence, red-tape in judicial process, mismanagement in govt. hospitals, extra judicial killing, democracy, discriminatory education system, dowry, domestic violence, corporal punishment, coaching and clinic business and such other. The sessions highlighted the issues, consequences and related HR and legal for the understanding of the general public. Many of the people present participated in discussions eventually and committed to take actions according to their abilities.

Human Rights Theatre Festival was organized annually by MNPs where many of national theatre personalities, HR activists, journalists were present as guests. Theatre groups including 13 MNPs from different districts performed their drama in the festival where major issues were, migration, torture against minorities, cross fire, discriminatory education system in Bangladesh, corruption, fatwa, domestic violence, war crime, forced disappearance etc. Three eminent personalities spoke at the Festival. Discussion meeting and recognition of local eminent personalities were also included in this programme. Other local theatre groups produced at least one street drama during the HR theatre festival.

Debates on HR

Debate and Cultural Competitions among BNADs were held in 12 districts. BNAD members of 48 schools of 12 districts participated in the debate competitions. The topics of the debates included “Lack of awareness of parents is the main cause of child marriage,” “Child labour is essential for the survival of the poor children.” “There is no alternative except co-education to establish equality among men and women” and such other. These sessions have raised awareness amongst school students and enabled them to understand the rationale and contents of different forms of HR.

BNAD to continue

Through the activities, students involved in BNAD have been motivated to continue the cultural activities. Many of them have joined MNP and working as advocates against anti-social and criminal acts. The activities of BNAD have been accommodated in class routines of 45 schools out of the 52 schools where ASK is working in partnership. Four schools have decided to create own fund to run BNAD in future. They are Rajur Bazar collegiate school and, Adarsaya Girls School in Netrokona district, Rebeca Habib Girls High School in Gaibandha district and Premier Ideal high school in Mymensingh district.

Theatre for groups and playwrights focus on HR issues

Some of the playwrights of the districts involved in MNP and BNADs have written plays on contemporary HR issues and incidents by collecting information, cases and using ASKs documentations. Prachayanat, one of the prominent theatre group in Bangladesh included two sessions on HR and Gender issues in the training curriculum of its School of Acting. ASK staff were invited to act as resource persons in different training programmes.

National wall magazine festival

ASK organized the annual National Wall Magazine Festival through its Bangladesh Dayal Patrika Parishad on HR issues, where more than 100 high schools and organizations participated with 200 wall magazines. Students of high schools participated to write and expose their creative talents. They wrote poems, stories, articles, drama, and comics and drew pictures on the war of liberation, history, human rights, gender, science, current affairs, ethnic groups, climate, agriculture and local scholars. The event involved a number of teachers, guardians, organizers, journalists and a huge number of readers. Both electronic and print media featured the news of the festival with due importance, which contributed in mass awareness on HR and gender issues.

Table: 6 Achievement on Awareness Raising in 2016

Activities	Achievements
People reached through HRA sponsored drama shows and day celebration events	485,370 persons (approx.)
National & International Days celebration by MNP & BNAD	74 events
National Wall Magazine Festival organized by Wall Magazine Council	1 event
Study circles on HR and contemporary issues for BAND and MNP members	217 study circles
Annual BNAD conference and performance evaluation events and inter school debate and cultural competitions organized for BNADs in the district level	12
Assistance to MNPs for organizing national conference of cultural activists	1
Ceremony of performance evaluation award of BNADs in the national level	1
Schools adopted and are running action theatre course as extra-curriculum activity	52 (in 13 districts)
Students enrolled in BNADs at schools	1,300 students
MNPs actively involved	61
Guide Teachers developed as training facilitators	52 guide teachers
Workshop on drama production facilitated by MNP and BNAD	123 workshops
Shows performed by MNPs and BNADs following training	965 shows
People present as audience	411,870 (aprox.)

3.1.2 Gender and Social Justice (GSJ)

The Gender and Social Justice Unit (GSJU) through its programme focused on mobilizing and developing community activism to protect rights and on raising awareness on gender equality and social justice. The Unit through its activities, aims to expand and strengthen ASK's endeavours to establish gender justice at the grassroots level. The programme was implemented in ten upazillas of ten districts jointly with local partner non-government organizations (PNGOs). More than 120 like-minded organizations have been working together who facilitated forming community-based organizations (CBOs) and HR forums and the PNGO work as a secretariat. There are 40 Manobadhikar Sangrakkhan Parishads (MSP) in 40 unions of 10 districts consisting of social opinion leaders for the prevention human rights violation. GSJU supports them with training, coordination of meetings and referrals. A total of 40 Manobadhikar Nari Samaj (MNS) with women have been organized in 10 districts. The MSPs and MNSs monitor the local HR situation, assist the victims of HR violations to report and seek redress, monitor and participate in the local Salish (traditional dispute resolution) process to ensure compliance with legal standards, and to encourage women's involvement. The GSJU also supported organizing networks of district level lawyers called Manobadhikar Ainjibi Parishad (MAP), who provide free legal aid and services to the disenfranchised victims of HR violation.

Through HR forums PNGO take joint initiatives. The PNGOs consider them as a HR organization and they take actions in case on HR violation instead of waiting for the national organizations raising their voice. They join to protest incidents of HR violations through rally, human chain, giving memorandum and sitting

demonstration with administration. At times they mobilize financial support for the victims for medical treatment and other necessities. The PNGOs organize yearly coordination meeting among ASKs initiated organizations at the local level for sharing experience regarding their tasks and challenges in addressing violation of HR and resolving local social problems related to participation in salish; helping survivors to file case; taking victims to police station or hospital; organizing rally and human chain; awareness campaigning and such other aspects.

MSP conducted 39 workshops with the standing committees of 40 Union Parishad (UP) and clarified the specific duties and responsibilities of the standing committees of the UPs. This has enabled the local CBOs to be involved in UP meetings and other regular activities. Some of the CBOs and UPs jointly celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March, International Human Rights Day on 10 December and 25th November etc. They also organized cultural programme in respective areas. Joint intervention by the local government and CBOs are now well accepted by the local people.

The 40 MNSs consisting of 1200 women are active in 40 unions of 10 districts. They organized workshops on Domestic Violence Act (2010) and 10 workshops with the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) to understand about the matters related to domestic violence and the services provided by the DWA, which also has strengthened the link with DWA. To ensure women's participation in Salish and decision- making process, MNSs organized 20 workshops with local salishkers. Through these workshops, training by ASK and other activities the MNSs are able to be present in meetings, attend salishes, take victims to hospitals

Table: 7 Achievement of Gender and Social Justice in 2016

Activities	Achieved
Training course on Gender and Community Activism	1
Workshop on District Based Human Rights report writing for 10 Partner Organizations & local organizations	20
Documentation by PNGOs- Monthly report by PNGO, scanning newspapers and publication of district based HR report	120
Support to follow up cases by CBOs regarding violation of rights	50
Legal camp	98
Yearly public meeting on HR issues	10
Cases filed in assistance with lawyers under GLAF for the poor people	152
Assist CBOs to take victim to thanas, hospitals, lawyers, court, holding rally, submitting memorandum and document	144
Participation in Salish	163
Assist CBOs to dialogue with the victims to identify the problems and resolving disputes	10
Workshop between CBOs and the Standing Committees of 2 Ups	39
Day observance	20
Training for CBOs	10
Local level workshops with the DWA	10
Workshops between MNS and salishkers	20
Assist MNS to take victim to thana, organize rally, submit memorandum, in case of VAW, document and disseminate report on violation of human rights	76
Meetings with the BAR Association	5
Study circle on CEDAW, RTI Act, gender discriminatory laws and practices, human rights and related contemporary issues for 10MAPs	10
Cross learning visit of lawyers to Bar Associations	2
Workshop on Govt. Legal Aid Fund	9

and lawyers, celebrating International Women Day and Human Rights Day and so on. Almost 50 members of MNS contested in local government election and 12 were elected.

The CBOs, because of their enhanced knowledge, information and skills are capable of approaching the local level state agencies for claiming their rights. They established liaison with local administration and can refer victims to agencies such as Department of Women's Affairs or the Department of Social Services (DSS). They now can initiate immediate action at the community level in case of gross human rights violation. The CBOs organized 163 events of salish where 343 females 479 males attended. This has helped in promptly responding to a conflict situation for redressal. These CBOs are now recognized as conflict resolution platform.

A total of 10 MAPs were formed with the local lawyers who organized 98 legal camps to provide advices on 152 cases under free legal aid fund. The legal camps help to create a bridge between the lawyers and the community to ensure necessary legal support and to ensure door to door legal assistance. The CBOs (MSP, MNS) arranged all physical facilities and the PNGO ensured presence of lawyers.

To ensure effective support from the executive committee of the local BAR Associations, the PNGOs and the MAPs jointly organized meetings with the BAR associations. The MAPs, through the workshops presented suggestions for better support to the victims in accessing justice. The MAPs arranged discussion meetings with the BAR Associations annually and the MAPs follow up the commitments made at the meetings for implementation.

The CBOs work for disseminating the information and encouraging the disadvantages people to take advantage of the Government Legal Aid Fund (GLAF). Therefore, MAPs organized 9 workshops with the Govt. Legal Aid Committees, panel lawyers, and the applicants at the union level and discussed experience of accessing the GLAF and the cases.

The achievement of the Unit is presented in the Table 7 (page 25).

3.2. Capacity building of Human Rights Actors

3.2.1 Training (TRU)

The trainers of ASK's Training Unit are proficient in conducting training and capacity building events in a participatory manner. The primary function of the Unit is to enhance capacities of human rights defenders. Currently, the Unit's efforts are concentrated in augmenting the capacities of CBOs and human rights theatre teams to internalize knowledge on human rights to enable them taking actions against human rights violations. Training is also imparted for ASK staff and PNGO staff in conducting activities as well for developing capacity of others. The clients include university students, development practitioners and other interested groups on human rights, gender equality, laws pertinent to VAW and rights based approach. The Training Unit has also been receiving and responding to request from other likeminded organizations and offers customized courses on a fee- for- service basis.

Major Achievement in 2016

Through 41 different training courses 737 (Female- 478 & Male-259) human rights actors were trained on several subjects. The Training Unit also supported other Units of ASK by conducting training for the staff and the programmes of GSJ, HRA, Outreach, Mediation and HWH Unit, where citizen groups from at least 48 unions and students from 48 schools were trained, which enhanced their capacity on claiming particular rights (social security, access to justice etc.) for disempowered people. Intensive training on human rights, gender, legal issues and social safety net were imparted for CBOs. The trainees also included representatives of CBOs, NGOs, MNP, educational Institutions, school students, Guide Teachers and UP members.

- It was evident from the training course evaluation reports, training follow up, coordination meeting and feedback from the training participants that 737 HR actors from different stakeholder groups were informed and sensitized on HR, gender and social justice issues through the training courses.
- Three training modules on Human rights, UN HR Mechanism, Leadership and Organizational Development were formulated and 2 modules on family laws and Salishi was reviewed and updated in 2012-2016.

Table: 8 Achievement in Training in 2016

Name of the course	No of events		No of participants		
	Target	Achievement	Female	Male	Total
For CBOs					
Training Follow up for MSP, MNS, BNAD & Guide Teacher	8	4	40	50	90
Training Supervision	5	5	1	6	07
Training on Social safety net & RTI for MSP & MNS	10	10	187	63	250
Training on family laws for the client of HWH & Group members of MMRU	8	5	64	-	64
For ASK Staff					
Training on human rights for ASK staff	1	1	12	10	22
Training on gender relation analysis for ASK staff	1	1	13	09	22
Yearly coordination meeting	1	1	08	12	20
Total	34	27	325	150	475

Impact in the Community:

Trained stakeholders become HR defenders: Guide Teachers, MSPs, MNS MNPs and BNAD leaders' emerged as local protesters against social stereotypes and HR violations. The training created a positive impact on knowledge, skills and attitudes of CBO leaders, Guide teachers and BNAD members. For instance, MNP members of Jhenaidah restrained a child marriage in January, 2016. A student of Jamila khatun girl's high school, Jhenaidah Sadar and Nigar Sultana, local leader of MSP used RTI as a tool to get information regarding medical services from union health complex of Netrokona Sadar.

Staff internalize organizational goal, objectives and working culture: The new staff received orientation courses from the Training Unit, which provided them knowledge on the values, norms, goals, working process and the culture of ASK. The staff was also trained on human rights, and gender relation analysis. According to the coordinators of the Unit, all the newly trained staff member felt integrated within the team and accepted the approach and the goal of ASK. Most of the trained staff members were able to deal with other Units confidently.

Table: 9 Achievement in Training Conducted on Request

Name of the course	Achievement	No of Participants		
		Female	Male	Total
Training on Legal frame work for protection of key marginalized populations, MSM, PLHIV, vulnerable youth for Link up Bangladesh staff	6	29	64	93
Training on human rights & gender relation analysis for university students & development workers	2	20	23	43
Training on human rights & family law for ASD group member	3	49	11	60
Training session on VAW for Govt. officers of Department of women affairs	1	14	3	17
Refreshers course on human rights & family law for ASD group member	2	41	08	49
Total	14	153	109	262

ASK caters to the training needs of other rights based organizations: Other like minder HR organizations and institutions requested ASK for conducting training courses. Among others Link up Bangladesh and Acton for Social Development (ASD) requested ASK to conduct training courses on sex workers rights, human rights and family laws. The course evaluation, correspondences, and reporting showed that the participants found the training useful. ASK has been considered a centre of excellence in the training in the field of human rights, gender and legal issues.

3.3 Legal aid and other support services

3.3.1 Mediation & Rapid Response (MRRU)

Lack of access to low cost legal and other services by the disadvantaged people has created a space and need for organizations such as ASK to support the disenfranchised people in accessing legal services and support. The Mediation and Rapid Response Unit addresses emergency HR violation issues and also to negotiate settlements of conflicts through mediation. Mediation is a low cost popular method for women to seek justice, especially for family disputes such as concerning desertion, divorce, dower, maintenance and child custody.

The MRRU received complains on different types of problems from help seekers. The issues included family affairs pertaining to non-payment of dower money and maintenance, child custody, desertion by husband,

Table: 10 Number of Survivors Served by the MRRU, LITI and Outreach Units

Activities/services	MRRU	LITI	Outreach	Total
Mediation & Litigation				
-New (2016)	955	171	825	1951
-Old (Rolled over from previous years)	433	1055	320	1808
Number of mediations conducted	1112	NA	337	1449
Number of total sessions	2852	NA	950	3802
Number of complaints resolved	357	NA	337	694
-New	205	NA	280	485
-Old	152	NA	57	209
Number of cases registered for litigation				
Number of new cases filed	NA	171	56	227
Old cases pending in court (up to Dec 31, 2016)	NA	1055	285	1340
Total cases disposed off	NA	247	50	297
-New	NA	8	28	36
-Old	NA	239	22	261
Money recovered (In Taka)				
-Number of survivors	357	44	1170	1571
-Av. award client (in Taka)	10,668,825	3,621,700	15,653,800	29,944,325
Rapid Action for Survivors				
Survivors receiving "legal advice" (referrals to elsewhere)	279	165	154	598
Survivors receiving "other" rapid action	451	NA	74	525
Workshop				
Organize and conduct 42 client workshops	-	-	1038	1038
Organize 284 legal awareness workshops with grass root people in the working areas	-	-	7769	7769



ASK lawyer is providing legal support to the client.

divorce, mal adjustment between the spouses, loss of shelter, illegal captivity by father, child custody etc. Matters related to torture and violence was also reported and help was sought. The issues included as mental torture, physical assault, rape, captivity by husband or parents, murder, fatwa, acid throwing, safe custody etc. These cases are transferred to Litigation Unit for action. At times, complainants were compelled to withdraw the divorce application due to the common belief about the necessity of Hilla (intervening marriage) to have conjugal live afterwards with the divorced spouse. Extra marital relation, impotency, denial of marriage etc. were the most common problems in this reporting period. MRRU also provided legal advice relating to issues such as family matters, physical assault for dowry, land related matters etc.

As the formal judicial system is time consuming, expensive, corrupt and even also biased against women's issues, mediation offers women a familiar and safer space to negotiate their rights and let their voices be raised and heard. Most of the people in Bangladesh especially women, prefer mediation by alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to litigation partly because it is perceived as being less antagonistic and partly because litigation is a costly and lengthy process. In response, ASK refers a significant proportion of legal complaints to mediation or ADR.

MRRU thus contributes to attain organizational objectives through mediation, negotiation, legal advice and rapid response to HR violation cases.

Mediation at ASK deals exclusively with family disputes and disputes arising from the treatment towards women workers such as garment workers and domestic service workers. ASK's "Rapid Response" refers to the rescue of victims of violence, illegal confinement, abduction and other forms of emergency. If mediation fails to solve problems, the case is referred to file a suit to demand justice for the assistance seeker.

Mediation and litigation services were given through the MRRU, LITI and Outreach Units for 1,951 new cases and 1,808 cases from the previous year. In 2016, a total of 227 new cases were filed. The details are presented at Table 11.

Positive impact on community:

Prompt services given: The activities of the Unit have created hopes among the disadvantaged about access to legal support and peaceful solutions on family disputes. This also provides confidence among the help seekers about prompt action against HR violations such as grievous physical assault, rape, torture etc. Some of them are informed about the organization's activities and at times the aggrieved persons resort to ASK's help after being informed by friends, relatives or other organizations. The activities including the rapid response is conducted through the ten legal aid clinics in Dhaka and other parts of the country. Aggrieved persons from different parts of the country visit the clinics or seek legal help by telephone. This Unit attends to all the complains to address them.

Legal advice and response to queries: Legal advice provided to 2,005 clients and the support for taking legal action, where necessary. This enabled the clients seeking justice. The clients are also informed about the legal status of the complaint and advised to take proper decision according to law. Queries of 1,829 clients meet up through continuous remedies of the clients, which is helping them to exercise their rights.

Support to underprivileged women

and children: Access to justice for 965 underprivileged women and children was facilitated by providing legal assistance through the legal aid clinics by registering their complaints.

Mediation enabled access to justice at a low cost: Mediations was conducted 1,113 times to resolve 687 complaints of which 357 were settled and 755 were ongoing. The mediations enabled the poor to avail justice at a low cost. Realization of dower and maintenance for the divorced/destitute women helped the poor and vulnerable women to support their livelihood. A positive impact of the programme is a sustained confidence among the disadvantaged regarding their ability to raise voice to claim their rights.

Recovery of economic rights of women: A total of BDT 11,195,125/- (one core eleven lac ninety five thousand one hundred twenty five Taka only) was recovered as dower money and cost of maintenance for wives as well as their children. Some women initiated self-employment activities upon receipt of their dower or maintenance.

Rescue, reintegration and family life: Victims of 451 HR violation cases were rescued and re-integrated in their families through rapid response that enabled them to continue with their normal life. Normal conjugal life of 451 families are sustaining due to the systematic follow up activities of MRRU.

Shelter for the victims: During this reporting period 80 victim women and 20 children in requiring emergency support were rescued for their safety and they were referred to halfway home.

In this reporting period a total no. of 106 general diaries were lodged in different police stations against occurrences of criminal offences which provide hopes to the victims of being protected by the state. The high number of client registration with the rapid response unit related to VAW enables ASK to assess the scenario.

Box 11: Case study-(Maintenance of special child)

Beside the regular tasks, this Unit conducted a special mediation where both party had taken remarkable decision with the strong negotiation of this Unit. The legal help seeker filed a complaint to ASK claiming her dower money and maintenance of her child after she had received divorce letter from her husband. She stated in her complain that she got married in 1999 and she had a daughter aged about 13 years who was a special child. Since the last 5 years her husband was involved in an extra marital affair with another lady. This lady came and created uproar at their resident several times, which increased distances between the two spouses. As a result, the husband left his wife and child at his father's resident where they were living from the very beginning of their marriage. The husband rented another house in November 2015. The help seeker and her child were living peacefully along with her in-laws at their previous resident. On 17th January 2016, the husband sent divorce letter to her. Then she decided not to live with her in-laws any more. After getting this complaint, this Unit took initiatives to mediate the matter as usual and served notice to the husband. On the date of mediation, both the parties agreed and signed a decision paper after discussion on conditions. The second party (husband) paid claimed dower money of the help seeker in four instalments through ASK. The second party also agreed to pay Taka 15,000/- for the maintenance of their daughter per month. The maintainable condition of this decision paper is that the help seeker is continuing to live with their child at the residence of the second party as before with her ex i- laws considering the betterment of their special child until December 2017. It was a remarkable achievement of this Unit's intervention for the interest of the special child.

Table: 11 Legal Aid Programme (Part II): Half-Way Home and Psycho-social Counselling

Activities/services	Half-Way Home	Psychosocial Component	Total
Number of survivors			
Provide shelter (including food, medical treatment, Psychosocial counselling, and recreational outings)	100	-	100
Women	80	-	80
Children	20	-	20
Provide counselling (by ASK counsellors)	100	492	592
Provide training			
Survivor attending 15 half-day workshop Transaction Analysis by staff counsellors of HWH	78	-	78
Survivor attending 4 Awareness raising training on HR & family law and gender relations analysis (via ASK training Unit)	32	-	32
Vocational training for survivors on "Cutting and tailoring" "Bakery" and "Block" (via hiring Professional trainers)	18	-	18
Recreational Programme at National Zoo and National Botanical Garden at Mirpur, Dhaka	20	-	20
Four Training on Communication Skills, Assertiveness, Conflict Management, Stress Management, Burnout Management for ASK and PNGO Staffs and teachers	-	101	101
Training on Basic Counselling Skills for school teachers	-	20	20
Two training on Basic Counselling Skills, Communication Skills and related mental health issues for GO/NGO staffs on request	-	40	40
Training on Transactional Analysis 100 with trainers from India	-	26	26
Orientation on psychosocial counselling for ASK staffs and school teachers	-	50	50
Four meetings for facilitating networking and advocacy issues with counsellors and psychotherapist	-	95	95

3.3.2 Litigation

Litigation Unit, one of the key units of ASK, was functioning from the very beginning and has been serving the poor and distressed in their need of protecting their human rights by providing free legal services. It mainly conducts cases in the courts and undertakes advocacy and awareness building and pursues with different concerned authorities to enable people to access justice. Due to corrupt judicial system and the ignorance of the mass people of their rights, the Unit faces problem in aiding to them.

Litigation Unit usually receives cases of gross violation of human rights and severe offence, such as rape, murder, torture, acid throwing, dowry, polygamy, detention matters etc. Most of the cases related to family matters are received from Mediation Unit when all the efforts of mediation and negotiations fail.

The staff lawyers' and panel lawyers of the Unit have dealt with all cases in or outside Dhaka. Panel lawyers mainly conducted cases in the High Court Division and Labour Court inside Dhaka, while staff lawyers conducted cases with district courts in or outside Dhaka. Some cases in labour courts were dealt with and other activities were performed according to work plan.

Positive impact on community

- The Unit of ASK has established a good reputation among communities on its services for litigation, therefore, many clients come for legal advice. Litigation Unit's lawyers provided legal advices to 165

persons who sought legal advice. Women, poor and disenfranchised people have become conscious about their legal rights and seeking legal resorts particularly for cases of dower, maintenance, rape, murder, torture, acid throwing; dowry, polygamy and so on.

- Litigation becomes the only option to provide remedy when mediation fails. Therefore, 170 new cases were filed and the Unit dealt with 875 more cases that continued from previous years. The Unit through its efforts has been able to raise confidence amongst the poor women, who now have the confidence to demand justice through litigation.
- When a verdict is given at the lower court in favour of the victim, often the opponents go to the higher court with appeal to get positive verdict. The Litigation Unit supports the victims at High Court division. A total of 168 were supported at the High Court Division with the help of the panel lawyers in this reporting period. The poor people gained ability to raise their voice against violation of rights, which in the long run helped them to seek justice at a low cost.
- During this reporting period, judgments in 120 cases were in favour of ASK clients in Dhaka and the panel lawyers got 85 positive judgments in favour of the clients at the higher court, which evidently established the rights of the oppressed. A number of women, children, and worker were supported individually through court and was able to recover BDT 3,621,700/- (Thirty six lac twenty one thousand seven hundred Taka only) as dower money, and maintenance for 44 clients and their children. Women could undertake self-employment opportunities with the money recovered.
- The services of the Litigation Unit of ASK has gained recognition by the members of Judiciary as well. Sometimes judges also referred clients to ASK as they are informed of the performance of the Litigation Unit in the court.

Box 12: Case Studies

1. *The Unit Lawyers moved a murder case of a six year old girl of at Gazipur district. After trial the Learned Court declared verdict giving punishment for the 2 accused persons and a sentence of five year imprisonment for another accused.*
2. *The Lawyers of the Unit moved a case of dowry in favour of a victim of dowry. The victim was burnt in fire by the accused and she died. She gave her declaration before death. After trial, the Learned Court sentenced the 2 accused for life time imprisonment.*

3.3.3 Outreach

Despite the Constitutional guarantee against any form of discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, religious identity and geographical location, discriminatory practices prevail in the society. As mentioned earlier, the poor find it difficult in accessing justice due to the cumbersome and costly legal procedures and the lack of general awareness of the legal rights. Poor governance and the lack of accountability of the state agencies



Rally and Human Chains organized by Partners NGOs of ASK

further aggravate the situation and the poor refrain from resorting to the legal procedures. Despite all the awareness raising efforts mainly of the civil society organizations, the number of unreported cases of human rights violation are far more than what is reported. The situation is worse in the rural areas.

Within this context, ASK's interventions include legal services, capacity building, awareness raising, networking and partnership. The legal aid services are extended beyond the capital city, Dhaka through the Outreach Unit. The Unit offers legal aid programme in partnership with local NGOs in seven districts outside Dhaka namely, Chittagong, Barisal, Hobigonj, Stakhira, Rajshahi, Bogra and Tangail. The Unit provides technical and supervisory support to the PNGOs who run the legal aid clinics. The clinics are open for the aggrieved persons, who can file a complaint. Considering the complaint and its nature and intensity, steps are taken, such as, settling the matter by mediation, filing court cases (if necessary), conducting the proceeding free of cost, providing counselling services, and follow up of the progress.

Impact on the community

All stakeholders support legal services for the poor: The underprivileged women and children have accessed legal assistance by registering their complaints at the legal aid clinics. Increased awareness about rights at the community level enabled the poor and disadvantaged accessing justice. The community people, lawyers, civil society, local government and district and upazilla level administration are more oriented about the human rights issues and they have showed their proactive roles in taking actions for upholding human rights, ensuring justice and reduction of violence against women. The poor have been able to access justice system at a low cost and the poor and vulnerable women received dower and maintenance for themselves and their children.

PNGOs' capacity enhanced: PNGO's run by local people who are very much known to the community are provided with orientation and relevant training to enhance their capacity to implement the programme. The members of PNGOs of 7 districts have been oriented through awareness raising workshops and they are able to provide services for the poor and combating violence against women. They play responsive role in taking actions on HRVs. For example, referring the victims to the legal clinics for assistance and providing moral support to the justice seekers. The members of the PNGOs are also playing remarkable role in convincing the disputed parties to respect the mediation settlement or to go for litigation etc. The staff of ASK goes to field in regular basis and monitor their work and progress of the activities.

Quick response to complaints: Using the network outside Dhaka, the Unit responded to 74 incidents of human rights violations by requesting either by phone, fax, or sending letter to the respective police stations, and public officials to take the reported cases into active consideration. The relevant authorities responded positively and took prompt actions because of the good repute of ASK with the authorities.

Client orientation and psychological support: Client workshops are very useful to reduce psychological pressure, reduce frustration and provide mental support and share the experiences about their sufferings and successes. A total of 42 client workshops were organized during the reporting period where altogether 940 women and 98 men clients took part. They learned about the legal process and the current status of their Salish and cases.

Panel lawyers support litigation: There are 77 panel lawyers in the working districts for conducting court cases. The quality of their dealings with clients has improved over time and at times the panel

Box 13: Community voice for demanding rights of minority

On 3rd April 2016, 3 boys named Rajib, Rony and Salim harassed some hindu girls into a local hindu religious programme called 'Haribasari'. One Ratan Chandra and Sanatan Pramanik came forward to protest for the girls. When Sanatan Pramanik tried to catch those boys, one of them stabbed him with a knife and ran away. Local people caught Rajib and others after the crime. After taking Sanatan Pramanik to the ShahidZiaurRahaman Medical College hospital, doctors declared him dead. All the local people started possession and went to the district commissioner office for getting justice.

The news of this incident was published in daily newspaper Prothom Alo on 4 April 2016 with significant importance. Upon receiving the news, PESD-ASK Outreach legal aid programme visited the area immediately. They talked to the victim family and assured them of proper legal support. The local police station was informed through official letter. As a result of all this, the police had started patrolling the area and later arrested Rakib, Rony and Salim. PESD-Outreach staff are in regular contact with the victim family and trying to give them proper legal support.

lawyers provide voluntary service in filing and moving the cases. Upon receipt of complains on family disputes, the panel lawyers initially refer to the PNGOs office for mediation. In 2016, 42Panel Lawyers Forum meetings were held where progress of the legal aid cases, human rights and gender issues were discussed. A total of 56 new cases 56 were filed and 284 old cases from previous years were dealt with.

Stakeholders' became supportive: Workshops with different local groups such as, Judges, Lawyers, Govt. officials, police officials, journalists, local government representatives and NGO representatives made them aware about the legal aid activities in the respective districts. Resultantly, they became supportive of assisting the victims of HRVs and became more responsive in taking up the cases and assisting the victims.

3.3.4 Support Services and Half Way Home (SS&HH)

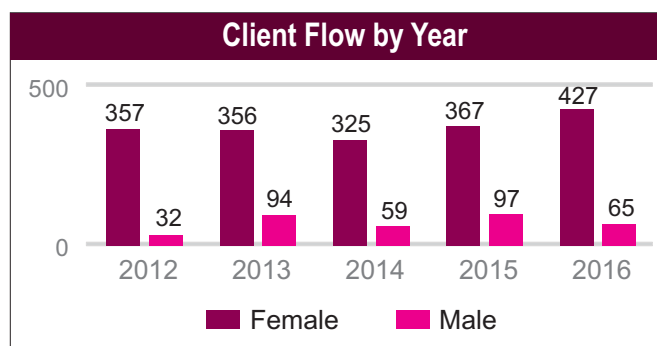
In 1990, ASK established its shelter for the survivors of violence to provide protection in emergency for vulnerable women and children who could escape from the immediate threat of violence. They often come empty handed or with some clothing only. They not only need legal aid but need food, shelter, medical care, psychological support and afterwards they need care during the court and mediation process. Sometimes clients need long-term support until rehabilitation. Considering the nature of cases, their security and confidentiality, they are referred to relevant government and NGO support service centres. Emergency support is provided all over the country but the halfway home is located in Dhaka. Halfway home is a safe shelter providing support and care for the disenfranchised women and children.

Positive impact of support service and halfway home services

Emergency Support: These are immediate support for the survivors of violence where they receive the basic needs and safety.

Awareness of HR and gender issues: Through awareness raising training and gender analysis, the clients become aware of the causes of social discrimination between men and women. Gender analysis at the halfway home enables the victims to internalize the gender issue and understand why they became victim. They learn about the family laws, basic human rights, and ways to demand rights. The training imparted in a participatory way helps them understand their own situation and at times they share their emotions and experiences. The counsellors provide emotional back up support. A refresher course was also organized during the year.

Counselling helps: Through counselling workshops, individual counselling sessions and group counselling sessions the clients find new ways of understanding their own issues and problems. They can think independently and identify ways to deal with the problems by themselves, become aware about one's own limitations. These understanding eventually makes them capable to take their own responsibility which directly contribute to decision making and autonomy. Many clients feel a sense of relief knowing that they are not alone in their journey.



3.3.5 Psycho-social Help

Psycho-social counselling capacity enhanced in the country: ASK is pioneer organization to promote psycho-social counselling (PSC) in Bangladesh. The counselling programme started in 1997 to facilitate psychosocial assistance for survivors of violence and the victims of HR violation. The Unit works to support the clients to gain emotional equilibrium and confidence for making decisions, and take charge of their own lives. The Unit also works for advocating for standard and qualified psychosocial counselling and helps in developing such skills in Bangladesh. The unit works for building awareness, providing counselling and psychotherapy service; enhancement of professional capacity through training, workshop, networking meeting; supervision and advocating for development of professional standard of PSC.

Understanding and demand for PSC enhanced: In this phase 2012-2016, the demand of counselling and psychotherapy increased remarkably, and 2,179 clients were served compared to a total of 701 clients in the



Training on Effective Communication Skills to deal with Adolescent Children

last phase. The number of counsellors also had to increase to address the clients' demand in 2016. A total of 492 individual cases were registered for counselling and psychotherapy which was only 389 in 2012. Only since 2012 for the first time the Unit has been receiving self-referred clients for counselling and psychotherapy. Many of them were not interested to enter the legal process. Individual or spouses together also requested for counselling when their relationship was at stress. The process helped them to deal with personal issues and many could resolve the problems by themselves. Often lack of awareness of the partners' interest or childhood environment contributed to the conflict, which were addressed in this process. Though counselling and psychotherapy was not declared openly as individual service of ASK, but 337 registered clients sought this service.

ASK recognized for PSC services: In 2014, 20 participants completed a one-year Diploma in Counselling course and took counselling as profession. A total of 42 professionals are receiving advanced training on Certified Transactional Analysis (TA) and Supervision. Those who completed the Diploma course in the current and earlier phases are providing counselling and psychotherapy services at educational institutions, hospitals, government, and non-govt. organizations. Each of them has served at least to 150 clients in 2016. These 42 participants were funded by ASK for the Diploma course and they are undergoing the higher level course by their own funding, which proves their increased motivation for gaining professional knowledge and skills under the leadership of ASK. Because of the recognition of ASK in this field, the conference of South Asian Transactional Analysis Association was planned to be held in Bangladesh organized jointly by ASK, South Asian Transactional Analysis Association and International Transactional Analysis but unfortunately it was cancelled after the terrorist attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in July 2016.

Stakeholders trained: Basic training on counselling and mental health issues were conducted for 142 school teachers, government and NGO workers during 2016. Many of them are using their skills and the clients receive advice and referral services as per need. The Unit also imparted training on mental health and basic counselling skills for trainee teachers from all over the country under training at the Govt. Teachers Training College, Dhaka.

After evaluating the training at the Govt. Teachers Training College, the Director, Training on behalf of the Director General, Secondary and Higher Secondary Education sent a request letter to ASK to provide those training for all trainees.

Technical support to the Government: The PSC Unit staff is also serving as resource person in training for electronic media which is contributing in national level advocacy and awareness. ASK, as a core member of the committee is contributing to develop a Mental Health Act. The Law Commission and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reviewed the draft, it is now waiting for its approval process by the Parliament.

3.4. Advocacy and Networking

3.4.1 Investigation (INV)

The aim of ASK's Investigation unit is to ensure transparency and accountability in public institutions for upholding human rights. The Unit regularly monitors and investigates complex cases of violence and appeals to the government for remedial actions. Investigative reports, documents, statistical data or information related to human rights violation/situation/issues are gathered and used for taking various remedial actions such as-litigation, mediation, research, advocacy or lobbying/campaign to promote and protect human rights. The frequency and numerous violations of human rights in Bangladesh have increased demand for more investigative activities. The Investigation Unit is also engaged in community mobilization, i.e. organizing human rights activists under district based Human Rights Defenders Forum (HRDF) and developing their skills to ensure investigation and community response at local and national levels. It also investigates cases of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Investigations are conducted by own staff as well as by the HRDF members at the community level. Press conferences and other dissemination activities are undertaken to raise public awareness and advocacy.



Discussion meeting and road march to prevent human trafficking and raise public awareness

Table: 12 Key Achievements of Investigation Unit in 2016

Activities	Target	Achievement
Investigation by own staff	80	83
Investigation by HRDF	75	76
Community mobilization:		
1) Formation of HRDF	02	02
2) Conduct Orientation/Workshop	02	02
3) Meeting with HRDF	04	04
4) Discussion Meeting	03	04
Fact Finding Training	02	02
Monitoring progress of investigated cases	25	33
Appeal/refer for legal remedy	110	172
Special observation of systematic violence by state or non- state actors	01	01
Annual Human Rights Report	01	01
Rapid response to HR violations:		
Drawing Urgent Attention	04	04
Emergency support	15	15
Press conference	01	01

Major Achievements

Monitoring and reporting of HR violations: Investigation Unit has succeeded to secure notable progress in systematic monitoring and fact-finding. During the period a number of HR violations were investigated and progress monitored and the findings have been disseminated nation-wide to uphold the transparency, accountability and a practice of human rights culture in Bangladesh.

Forming and capacitating human rights defenders at local level: Investigation Unit has been active in forming Human Rights Defender Forum (HRDF) and capacitating the Human Rights defenders at the local level to strengthen the network so that the HR violations are responded locally and monitoring becomes stronger.

Appeal/referral for legal remedy: Besides the monitoring and response to human rights violation at both local and national level, the Unit is engaged in advocacy at different levels and has contributed in strengthening activism towards Human Rights Culture in Bangladesh. It has responded in cases of human rights violation by state agencies and officials and appealed to the concerned authorities for action against them (such as Advisors, Secretary, Director/Asst. Secretary of concern ministry, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Police Superintendent, Officer in Charge and other govt. officers).

Refer HR issues to National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other HR organizations: Besides, appeal to the authorities, investigation reports and appeal letters were also sent to Chairman of NHRC for remedial purpose. The Unit also communicated with other HR organizations at the national and grassroots levels to mobilize and build network for collaborative actions against grave HR violations.

Inputs to legal and policy reform advocacy: Based on the investigation conducted by the Investigation Unit, the Legal and Policy Reform Advocacy Unit of ASK proceeded with Writ Petition and Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in a number of cases of HR violations. These initiatives ensured access to legal action by the victims and in some of the cases their rights were upheld by the Courts. Still most of such cases are under trial.

Rapid response to HR violations: Rapid response to victim's urgent needs is essentially important for the victims. The victims and community both demand rapid response even during the process of investigation. A sense of rights and demand of justice have been generated among the victims as well as the local people. The rapid response increases awareness and a sense of responsibilities among the administration and law enforcing agencies to protect the rights of the victims.

Publication of Annual HR Situation Report: Publication of Annual HR situation report under the Unit has become an acclaimed initiative both at the national and international levels. It helps in getting a comprehensive overview and an analysis of the HR situation in the country and enables activists to undertake required advocacy at different levels. It also raises awareness as well as policy perspectives for the public as well as policy makers and activists.

3.4.2 Documentation Unit

The main objectives of the Documentation Unit are dissemination and preservation of information. The Unit maintains a library of print and audio-visual materials. It collects, compiles and archives news clipping from 9 national dailies, 2 weeklies, 1 monthly and 5 quarterlies on the situation of human rights, legislative changes and governance issues for dissemination to the media, researchers, lawyers, students, ASK staff and members. Since documentation is the first step towards further investigation, the Unit has played remarkable role in contributing and facilitating all other relevant ASK initiatives for HR protection and promotion. Also for the learning and information, videos and films are shown from time to time to the staff of ASK and the PNGOs.

Major Achievements

A data bank for both ASK's internal and external use: The Unit collects information primarily from print media, compiles and preserves them systematically which helps in ASK's internal reporting and initiatives. It has become a well-recognized source of data for researchers, students, media, academia and other national and international organizations. The Unit maintains the ASK website with current information and data on human rights situation. It also provides HR related statistics and reports quarterly, half yearly and annually to different national media. It also works as a source for different ASK publications.

Facilitating HR defending activities of different units of ASK: The Unit identifies the areas of concern from the news of the national dailies and presents them in the Action Meeting. Based on such information, different Units are assigned responsibilities to take actions as appropriate on human rights violation.

Table: 13 Key Achievements of Documentation Unit in 2016

Activities	2012-2015		2016	Trend
	No	Average		
Acquire books and documents	1833	458	421	(-) 37
Acquire videos, films, photographs	48	12	12	0
Develop and distribute bibliographies	48	12	12	0
• Copies sold	9476	2369	880	(-) 1489
• Proceeds (Taka)	422,318	105,580	113,207	(-) 7627
Distribute ASK's Publications and Bulletin*	96594	24149	30597	(+) 6448
Participation in book fairs	17	4	4	0
Cumulative and statistical Charts	774	194	343	(+) 149
Total Users	1576	394	224	(-) 170

* Bulletin is complementary and distributed amongst donors, PNGOs, HR-oriented NGOs, High Court and Supreme Court, Bar associations, NHRC, police, law faculties in public universities.

Table: 14 List of Films and Videos Shown to ASK Staff in 2016

Muktadara (Film of Freedom)	Joy Jatra (Journey to Victory)	Mritika Maya
Video about Staff Retreat 2015	Common Gender	Shobder Jhoddho Jatra
Rukeya	Shamol Chhaya	Runway
Ostitto (Existence)	Gohine Shobdo	

3.4.3 Publication & Communication

ASK's publications have been well reputed for raising issues of public interest, particularly relating to rule of law, democracy and human rights contributed by development thinkers, HR activists and such other. The ASK publications highlight contemporary incidences, new laws and important judgements, issues on governance, non-discrimination and social justice and issues related to violence by state agencies. Publication of quarterly *Bulletin* is a regular and major activity of the Unit. Besides, books and newspaper articles focusing on human rights, policy reform and gender issues are also published each year. Meetings with the readers of ASK bulletin designed to create interest in contributing articles to the bulletin is arranged. Participants are selected from among students and professors from law faculties.



ASK Bulletin: ASK Bulletin (quarterly) contains the inclusive reflections of human rights situation and analysis of Bangladesh. It works in providing an analytical presentation of current HR issues to the readers. It also includes writing and assessment on various laws and policies which helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the legal system of the country. Most prominently ASK Bulletin upholds the freedom of expression through accommodating diverse opinion with due regards. The Unit has published 20 Bulletins during the period 2012-2016 and 4 in 2016 uninterrupted.

Books, Newspaper Articles and other Publications: Communication and Publication Unit has published books on law, women rights and also on different issues of public concern. During the period of 2012-2016, the Unit has facilitated publication of 23 articles (on average) in national dailies annually.

Table: 15 Books, Newspaper articles and other publication in 2016

Articles for print & online media	24	Daily Janakantha, Prothom Alo, Bonik Barta, Songbad, Dhaka Triibune.
<i>Bulletin. Quarterly.</i> (8,000 copies per issue).	4	Cover stories: March issue on Tea workers Movement for Land protection, June issue on Local Government Election, September issue on Rampal Power Plant and the December issue was on Santal Movement for Rescue of Lost Land (December).
Books on emerging HR issue.	1	Chikitshay Obohela (Medical Negligence) 2nd edition, 500 copies.(Laws relating to VAW in Bangladesh)
Publish ASK annual report.	1	64 pages.
Meetings with readers of ASK Quarterly Bulletin.	2	Participants selected from among students and teachers from law faculties. Venues in Dhaka and Sylhet.
Study circles with ASK staff	9	Discussions based on ASK' publications (Bulletin and books)

3.4.4. Legal Advocacy & Policy Reform (LAPRU)

The Legal Advocacy and Policy Reform Unit works to protect fundamental rights of the citizens through Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and participates in out of court advocacy programmes with the government and other like-minded groups against human rights violations. This Unit also prepares drafts and recommendations for legal reform and submits the same to the relevant authorities. It is the focal organ of ASK in building a human rights network and strengthening HR activism together with different CSOs and HR organizations through engaging in legal actions and policy advocacy. The Unit monitors the domestic application of international instruments and observes implementation of positive judgments given in PILs. In the current phase, the Advocacy Unit has taken initiatives to introduce PIL and Public Interest Laws in the district courts. It is supporting in building capacity of the Lawyers of the District Courts to defend and protect the rights of the poor and vulnerable sections, who are unable to bring PIL issues before the High Court due to their financial insolvency and lack of awareness.

Table: 16 Performance of Advocacy and Networking in 2016

Key Activities	Number
Public Interest Litigation (PIL)	
• Right to dignity (Suo Moto Rule No.06 of 2016)	1
• Access to justice (Writ Petition No-7441/2016)	1
• Right to shelter (Writ Petition No. 14402/2016), (Civil Petition for Leave to Appeal No-286/2016)	2
• Worker's safety (Writ Petition No. 12182 of 2016)	1
• Right to equal protection of law (Writ Petition No. 13840 of 2016)	1
Follow up of pending cases	12
PIL Review workshop for lawyers	1
Workshop with the district level lawyers on PIL	1

Major Achievements

Filing of Public Interest Litigations (PIL): Legal Advocacy and Policy Reform Unit filed several PILs on diverse issues concerning violation or threat of violation of civil, political as well as social, economic and cultural rights. During 2012-2016, the unit filed a total of 38 PILs. The prime issues of PIL included issues of right to life, right to equal protection of law, right to education, right to equal opportunities, workers' safety,

right to shelter, right to access to justice and right to dignity. Most of these PILs are pending for the final hearing as of now but with the filing of PIL, the High Court Division (HCD) has taken some prompt actions that have stopped continuation of violation of human rights on that particular issue of concern. Some of such achievements include:



Santal community of Gobindagonj, Gaibandha.

1. Writ Petition No. 14402/2016: Challenged the involvement of the police in committing offence instead of protecting persons and properties of Santal Community of Gobindaganj, Gaibandha from the attack of the local miscreants under the leadership of local parliament member, Union Parishad Chairman and Rangpur Sugar Mills Authority resulting into death and assault of Santal people and also torch and eviction of their 2,500 houses. After that incident Santal people were under threat about their safety and security. Police filed criminal case on behalf of the Santal people and accusing the Santal people hiding the involvement of police. In that situation, Santal people tried to file another case with the assistance of ASK bringing specific allegations against the MP, Chairman and other people. But the police did not record the case. As part of interim order High Court issued the following direction to the local police:

- i. To record the case filed by the Santal people bringing specific allegations against the MP, Chairman and other people and to investigate the same by the Police Bureau of Investigation.
- ii. To investigate about the involvement of the police in setting fire in Santal houses by chief Judicial Magistrate of Gaibandha.
- iii. To ensure the safety and security of the Santal people including of their freedom of movement.

Outcome: Safety and security of the Santal people has been ensured. Culture of impunity of the police and powerful persons including MP and Chairman has been challenged. The case is pending for hearing.

2. Civil Petition for Leave to Appeal No-286/2016- The High Court stayed illegal eviction operation of 20,000 dwellers of Kallyanpur slum of Mirpur, Dhaka. The Government filed appeal against that order. After hearing both the parties, the Appellate Division upheld the High Court's order.

Outcome: 20,000 dwellers of Kallyanpur slum have been protected from illegal eviction and they are residing there peacefully.

3. Writ Petition No. 13840 of 2016: Challenged the inaction of the government's authorities particularly the police and Upozila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) to protect the person and properties of the Hindu Community of 10 villages of Nasir Nagar Upazila under Brahmanbaria district from the attack of the local criminals resulted assault to the Hindu Community people and vandalization of more than fifteen temples and hundreds of homesteads. After filing the case, and broadcasting in all electronic and printing media, the Government withdrew the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Nasir Nagar and Officer in Charge (OC) of

Nasir Nagar Police Station. As part of the advocacy strategy the hearing of the case was kept on hold as the government took positive initiatives. The case is pending for hearing.

Outcome: Police is active in taking action against the incident of attacks on the Hindu Community.

4. Suo Moto Rule No.06 of 2016:

The High Court issued Suo Moto Rule against the humiliation of a teacher in Narayanganj district by the local Member of the Parliament (MP) compelling him to hold his ears by hand and to squat on the ground. After investigation, police did not find the said MP liable or anybody for that heinous activity.

ASK appeared in the case as an intervenor annexing all relevant documents (Video clippings, Affidavits, Newspaper reports, Fact-finding reports etc.) showing that the local MP was the main perpetrator. ASK's main submissions were "No one is above the law, but all are under the law and this is the essence of Rule of Law." and in this aspect, ASK prayed for a Judicial Inquiry to find out the perpetrators. After hearing the submission, the High Court rejected the Police Report and directed for Judicial Inquiry into the matter and the inquiry report is yet to be submitted. The case is pending for final hearing.

Outcome: Culture of impunity of the powerful and influential persons has been challenged to establish Rule of Law.

5. Writ Petition No. 12182 of 2016: Challenged the negligence of the government's authorities concerned to prevent deaths and injuries of the workers and others from a fire incident at the factory of Tompaco Foils Limited, in Tongi, Gazipur resulting in death of 29 workers. The High Court issued show cause notice as to why their failure and negligence to ensure workplace safety should not be declared to be without lawful authority and why there should not be direction to take effective action to investigate prosecute and punish those responsible for the fire in the said factory. The High Court also directed the Bangladesh Bank to issues a circular to all the Commercial Banks not to disburse any money to the Tompaco Foils Authority so that the compensation awarded for the families of the diseased and injured victims can be paid. The case is pending for hearing.

Outcome: Common practice of negligence by the factory owners and Labour Ministry in respect of workplace safety has been challenged.

6. Writ Petition No-7441/2016: Illegal occupation of 496 acres of private lands by the Forest Department in the name of forestation and recording the said lands in their own name as owner left more than 5,000 people landless in Domar area of Nilphamary district. Moreover, the Forest Department gave lease of the said lands to the other people for cultivating crops and constructing market instead of forestation. The High Court issued a show cause notice upon the Forest Department as to why the retention of management and control of the said lands should not be declared unlawful and why they should not be directed to release the lands in favour of the real owners. The case is pending for final hearing.

Outcome: Illegal occupation of huge amount of private lands by the Forest Department has been challenged to protect the right to property of the citizens.

- **Writ Petition No. 3814/2012:** ASK along with four human rights organizations and five slum dwellers challenged the arbitrary and forced eviction of 2,000 residents and eviction threat to other 120,000 residents of Korail slum. The High Court directed the Government to stop eviction process until disposal of the case and to submit a progress report of the rehabilitation programme taken by the Government in 2008. As a result, 120, 000 slum dwellers were protected from illegal eviction.



Vandalization of homesteads of Hindu community of Nasir Nagar.

- **Writ Petition No. 8523/2011:** Writ Petition against the inaction of the government to take back 500 Bangladeshi nationals incarcerated in Dammam Jail of Saudi Arabia. On 31.12.2012 the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment issued a letter to ASK stating that following the High Court's orders, the said 500 Bangladesh nationals had been brought back to Bangladesh.
- **Writ Petition No- 3075/2015:** ASK Challenged the inaction of police to protect 14 Hindu families of Barguna district resulting in their eviction from their homestead by the local criminals. As per the High Court's direction, the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Barguna conducted an inquiry into the matter and found the complaint as valid. Eventually, following the Court's direction (in a judgment) the said Hindu families were resettled in their village and the government established a Police Camp there for their future protection. Moreover, the High Court directed the local police to ensure security of the other members of the Hindu Community of Barguna district.
- **Writ Petitions No. 5541 of 2015:** PIL was filed against failure of the police to ensure prompt and effective response in recording an FIR against an allegation of rape and sexual violence of an ethnic minority woman, delay in sending her to the Victim Support Centre and delay in sending her for medical examination. The High Court directed the Government to disseminate a circular to all police stations to ensure required service to all concerns and to record complaints of rape without delay. In pursuance to the order of the Court, the Police Head Quarters issued and disseminated the circular to all police stations of the country. The case is pending for hearing.
- **Writ Petition No. 9520/2014:** Challenged misuse of power by police against shooting at both legs of a person implicating him in a false case out of personal enmity. The High Court issued show cause notice to the Government asking explanation as to why police should not be restrained from illegal activities by misusing of power. The High Court also directed to arrest the said police-men and to provide the cost of medical treatment to the victim. The police men are now in jail and the case is pending for hearing.

Draft and propose new laws: Advocacy and Policy Reform Unit drafted two (2) new laws, the "Domestic Workers Protection and Registration Act and the "Slum Dwellers Resettlement Act" and proposed for its approval.

Research/study reports on emerging issues: The Unit conducted three researches on i. Assessment on the Implementation and Enforcement of Judgements and Orders obtained by ASK in different PILs in Bangladesh (2012), ii) Medical Negligence and Fraudulent Practice in Private Clinics: Legal Status and Bangladesh Perspective (2013), and iii. Position Papers on Legal Status and Rehabilitation Scope of the Slum Dwellers (2015).

3.4.5 Media and International Advocacy (MIA)

The Media and International Advocacy Unit (MIA) is the focal point for ASK's contacts with the national and international media, human rights networks and such mechanisms. MIA maintains a close collaboration as well as cooperation with international human rights organizations in their Bangladesh related activities. MIA provides necessary information and facilitates their advocacy or fact-finding missions, or consultations held in Bangladesh. Accordingly, during the current phase of 2012-2016, MIA Unit of ASK played important role in advocacy at the national, regional and international levels for legal and policy reforms. It has also participated in and engaged with different human rights networks. One of the key activities at the national level was strengthening capacity for the NHRC. The Unit also acted promptly at the incidences of human rights violations for advocacy both at national and international levels. The Unit also prepared reports on human rights situation related to different international treaties and conventions.

Major Achievements

Second Cycle of Universal Periodic Review (UPR): In the year 2012, ASK, as the secretariat of Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) coordinated the preparation process and submission of the 2nd cycle UPR Report. It also engaged the NHRC in the process. With the submission of UPR Report, ASK along with HRFB played a vital role in presenting the HR situation of Bangladesh from an alternative platform and perspective. Along with the projection of real scenario, the report included a number of specific recommendations to promote the HR situation. It is considered as a tool to make the government accountable on particular issues of concern. Following the submission of the report, the Media and International Advocacy Unit published a book titled "**UN Compilations of UPR Reports**" in English and published another book in Bengali on the "**2nd Cycle of Universal Periodic Review on Bangladesh**" and disseminated those books widely among the relevant stakeholders.

Table: 17 Key Activities of the Media and International Advocacy Unit (MIA)

Media Advocacy	Target	Achievement
Press statements prepared	50	45
Uploaded ASK Press Statements and Statistics in the website	Cont.	Cont.
International Advocacy		
The ANNI focal from ASK participated in the 9th Regional Consultation of Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) in association with Asian Forum For Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)	-	1
Endorsed a letter of concern prepared by the International Service for Human Rights about the restrictions on civil society participation at the UN on 16 May 2016	-	1
Endorsed a petition call on the Nepal Government to Stand Firm on their policy decision and to fully implement and monitor the Free Visa Free Ticket Policy.	-	1
Endorsed the Statement for the Release of Deba Ranjan Sarangi on 31 March 2016	-	1
Opinion generating through press statement/ writing(UPR related)	4	5
Liaise with the OHCHR	1	1
National Advocacy		
Assist to conduct fact finding by task force members	120	110
Assist to send memorandum to relevant authorities and await response	60	21
Processing and drafting complaints to be filled to NHRC	30	7
Bi-monthly meeting by task force members in 12 districts	72	70
Regional coordination meeting of the task force members	4	4
Thematic workshop for the task force members	12	12
National meeting between survivors and NHRC	1	1
Annual report on engagement with NHRC	1	1
Workshop on implementation of international HR standards and role of HRDs	1	1
Digital Advocacy		
Maintaining ASK Website	Cont.	Cont.
Produce and release of monthly E-Bulletin	12	12

Submission of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Report: The alternative report on the implementation of civil and political rights was submitted on 18 December 2015 to the UN Human Rights Committee. ASK, as the secretariat of Human Rights Forum Bangladesh coordinated the report preparation, finalization and submission process with CSOs in cooperation with CCPR centre.

Submission of Asian NGOs Network on National Institutions (ANNI) Report: ASK advocates to mobilize and ensure effectiveness of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for protection and promotion of human rights. In addition to national level advocacy, ASK recognizes the need of advocacy at the regional and international levels for strengthening of the National Human Rights Institutions. Therefore, ASK engaged with the Asian NGOs Network on National Institutions (ANNI) and prepared the Country Chapter Report. The reporting has been regarded as one of the major advocacy tools for strengthening NHRC through projection of its current initiatives. It also serves to protect and promote HR situation along with highlighting the areas that the Commission needs to concentrate further.

Engagement with UN Special Procedures: ASK has been communicating with the Special Rapporteur on different issues of human rights violation. Based on these communications, the UN Special Rapporteur expressed special concern in various cases. For example, information was sent to the Special Rapporteur on

the Freedom of Expression and Opinion in October 2013 on the amendment of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. The information highlighted the sections that had created concern among the human rights and civil society organizations as these sections could be used as tool to violate freedom of expression and opinion. The Office of the Special Rapporteur sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh based on the information.

3.5 Protection of Children

Child Rights Unit (CRU)

The Child Rights Unit advocates for child rights in Bangladesh with emphasis on ensuring services for their development and to ultimately end child labour. The Unit collaborates with the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition of Bangladesh and performs the responsibility of preparation and submission of the alternative report to the UNCRC every four years.

The Unit also runs Drop-in-Centres in Dhaka. ASK's aim is to educate children and equip them with the skills and attitudes that enable them to learn to earn. The purpose is to bring children out from hazardous child labour, provide them support and prepare them for better paid employment. CRU uses its education programme as the launching pad for intensive efforts to change the attitudes of parents, adults, employers, members of the community, administration and policy-makers towards using child labour. CRU publishes the child rights monitoring report by using the child rights monitoring information provided by the coalition members.

1. Major activities performed under the core project of ASK in 2016

Orientations, workshops and trainings on soft skills for working children

Two orientation programmes on effective communication skills and 2 workshops on code of conduct (CoC) were arranged for working children. A total of 133 children participated in these orientations and workshops. Through the orientations and workshop, children learned how to effectively communicate with others, how to express their emotion positively, and how to negotiate with employers and others.

During the reporting period a total of 1,938 (boys- 640, girls-1,298) children improved their soft skill by participating in workshops and training on 7 topics. A total of 97 workshops and 2 trainings on 'My World' were facilitated by the Unit for children using a manual 'My World' designed by ASK Experts. It contains 12 topics of soft skills, such as, Myself, My body, My food, My neighbour, etc.

One girl from "My World" workshop group of Mohammadpur centre was selected to participate at the Shornokishoree quiz programme organized by Shornokishoree Network Foundation, Adolescent Health Network of Bangladesh and Channel I.

2. Children's participation in excursions, art competitions, essay competitions and other recreational activities

Music, Art, and theatre are used for developing children's creative potentials and for their emotional well-being. During the reporting period 77 art classes, 286 music classes were held for the children. Children from 6 DICs also participated in 8 national art competitions organized by ASK and other organizations during different national and international days. They also received award for their good performance.



Winners of the art competition

Winners of the art competition

Annual art exhibition of working children was organized where 26 children participated with 60 paintings. This year the theme of the exhibition was “Rang a Rang a Rangdhunu”, to release the creative potentials of the children through the seven colours of the rainbow. Almost all the paintings were sold at a total price of BDT 51, 200 (Fifty one thousand and two hundred Taka only). The money was given to the children artists and they used the money to buy their books, other study materials and to celebrate the Eid festival.

The children observed different days and participated in 4 gatherings and 2 rallies organized by the CRU. As a part of Alliance Against Child Labour (an alliance of 11 child rights based organizations) 6 children from ASK participated in the cultural activities on the observation of “World Day Against Child Labour”. The annual excursion was also organized for the children where 204 children participated (girls 127 and boys 77) and enjoyed a day off with lots of fun and enjoyment.

3. Health, food, and legal support to working children

Working children face several health problems as they often live in unhygienic situation. A total of 1,715 children (Boys- 602, Girls-1113) were provided with health support with the assistance of Dhaka Community Hospital which included first aid, routine check-up, medical treatment and referrals to relevant hospitals. Through this health support, children's health problems were identified, and they were provided treatment to ensure a healthy life.

In the process, the children became aware about their health, body and reproductive health through workshops. Psychosocial help becomes crucial need for working children. They had to go through various stressful experiences which sometimes negatively affect their self-esteem and behaviour. During the reporting period 85 girls (group and individual) children received active listening for their personal growth. ASK provided mid-day meal to 2,231 working children.

The Legal Aid Unit provided legal aid services for 5 working children in the last six months. The Unit organized legal clinics in the drop in centres every month creating opportunity to access legal support by community people, working children and their parents.

4. Linking working children to formal education

ASK supported 294 (Boys-97, Girls-197) working children to enrol in public and private primary schools and NGO schools. A total of 14 children appeared in Secondary School Examination (SSC) and passed the examination with good grades. They also were admitted in higher secondary class.

Children attended newspaper assembly and library study activities in the drop-in centres. They received information about the social, political and cultural situation of the country and global issues that enhanced their general knowledge. These also encouraged the children to get formal education. A sponsorship programme for deserving disadvantaged children is supporting 41 children to continue their education.

ASK supported 26 children to receive vocational trainings from different institutions and organizations. Of whom 24 children established their own business after receiving the training on tailoring (20 children) and computer operating (4 children). Two children were trained on electronic services.

5. Trainings, workshops, and networking meetings for community people, employers and parents

During the reporting period 25 workshops, 9 trainings, 1 networking meeting, 3 community watch group meetings for community people, employers and parents were organized. The topics were Child Rights Convention (CRC), Code of Conduct (CoC) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). Six Community Watchdog Groups were formed in 6 areas to monitor regular school attendance by working children.

People of the community (parents, guardians, employers, school, police, ward commissioner) have become more responsive regarding the rights of working children. Two child marriages were stopped.

The Head Teachers of 10 schools (primary and high schools) decreased the admission fees, tuition fees and coaching fees for 53 children considering their economic condition.

Changes in the behaviour of 80 employers towards working children were observed after meetings, workshops and trainings on CRC and CoC. They stopped physical punishment to their child employees, and encouraged them to go to the drop-in centres and formal schools. A total of 195 working children from 6 areas (Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Shanti bag, Goran, Bashabo and Jonson Road) were admitted to formal schools by the members of Community Watch Groups (CWG).

A total of 6 meetings and 6 trainings were organized for the Ward Commissioners and Councillors on CRC and child protection. Child rights protection committees were formed by the Councillors in ward no 2, 29, 33 and 43 of Dhaka city. These committees took responsibility to bring working children of their community in the drop-in centres. Establishment of another drop-in centre in Ward no. 2 is in the process with the joint initiative of child right protection committee and CWG.

During the reporting period, some members of corporate sector were encouraged to be pro-active towards the issue of child rights. As a result, different initiatives were taken by the corporate sector to promote the rights of the working children i.e. Vivak group and Trade vision sponsored 4 and 5 children respectively for higher education.

The ongoing programme has been successfully running with the co-operation of the parents. Parents have taken the financial responsibility to provide educational support, send their children to the formal school and to keep regular follow up of their children's progress of education. They also sent their children to hospital for treatment, bought medicine and withdrew their children from hazardous child labour.

6. Raise awareness against physical and humiliating punishment in formal schools

Physical and humiliating punishment is a common phenomenon in the daily life of school children in Bangladesh. Children are physically and psychologically affected due to physical and humiliating punishment. Not only that, it also contributes significantly to children's dropping out of school. Most of the working children dropped out before completing the grade five due to bad treatment in schools. In 2016 CRU worked intensively with 7 schools in its 6 working areas. As a result, the incidents of physical and humiliating punishment decreased significantly in these schools. These schools are taking special care of the working children considering their special needs. Teachers have also changed their behaviour and providing psychological support to them.

Monitoring Child Rights Situation in Bangladesh Project

Achievement in 2016:

- Developed, published and launched the situation analysis report titled “Children in Bangladesh 2015: Progress towards Commitments” by using the information collected by the Coalition.
- Organized a consultation with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) for establishing a separate Directorate for children and finally submitted a draft proposal to MOWCA to this effect.
- Submitted the draft Act on National Commission for Rights of the Children (NCRC) to MOWCA and MOWCA formed a review committee including members from civil society to review the draft law. The draft Act was also shared with the Parliamentary Child Rights Caucus (PCCR).
- As part of advocacy initiatives on the ratification of Optional Protocol 3 (OP3), two divisional sharing events together with National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) were conducted with different stakeholders including government officials. Another sharing was conducted with the Parliamentary Child Rights Caucus (PCCR).
- Mid-term assessment on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has been completed and started preparation to engage in 3rd cycle of the UPR.



Sharing meeting with the Parliamentary Child Rights Caucus (PCCR) on the ratification of OP3

Box 14: Case Studies

1. *Sathi Akhter (16) lost her father when she was only 9 years old. Her mother used to work at others' houses as domestic help to maintain the family. ASK arranged sponsorship for Sathi in 2012 to help continue her education. She passed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 2016 with GPA 4.61. Now she is studying Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level at Madartek Abdul Aziz School and College. Besides her study, she is also trying to take tuition or any other work to manage her education cost. Sathi loves to paint. She participated in different art competitions and received prize for excellent performance. She wants to be a doctor in future.*
2. *Md. Sabuj, a 16 years old boy is a recipient of ASK's services. The boy struggled throughout his childhood against poverty. His father left his mother and him when he was 11 years old. His mother was not physically well but worked at houses as a domestic help to run the family. ASK referred Sabuj to Underprivileged Children Education Programme (UCEP), an NGO and he took vocational training on electronic services from there in 2014. He used to run his educational costs by doing small electrical services. He got GPA 4.15 in his SSC examination in 2006. He wants to be a journalist in future. He also has interest in music, dance and arts. He learnt paintings from ASK Drop in Centre (DIC). He participates in the art and cultural competitions organized by ASK and Shurer Dhara. He also got prizes in national and international competitions. Sabuj regularly performs in the cultural programmes of different television channels. Currently he is studying HSC at Begum Fazilatunnessa Government College.*

Protesting VAC (Violence Against Children)

ASK undertook different advocacy initiatives to uphold the rights of the children, which included:

- Submission of campaign and advocacy proposal to address Violence Against Children (VAC) to MOWCA jointly with the Coalition members.
- Issuance of statement on VAC issues and its prevention.
- Organizing human chain.

Challenges faced

- Lack of systematic mechanism to preserve information and administrative complicity of Government agencies to provide information hampers collection of data and reporting on child rights monitoring. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are mainly implementing project based activities. Therefore, comprehensive data or information on child rights situation is difficult to get. Long-term strategic plan for periodic and systematic monitoring of the situation is absent.
- It is also difficult to collect and preserve information systematically from the database of the coalition members.
- To run the monitoring and advocacy programme with limited resources is difficult for the Secretariat.

Sexual exploitation of children online and in travel and tourism project

Under the project "sexual exploitation of children online and in travel and tourism", 8 socialization centres in different working areas were established where 808 children at risk registered and received educational services. Vocational trainings in tailoring, beautification, computer was imparted to 204 children and 37 children were placed in decent jobs. A total of 594 children enrolled in mainstream primary and secondary level programme. Besides, 724 vulnerable children participated in 48 awareness raising sessions. The CRU conducted 34 sessions where 263 children and 239 parents participated in group counselling. For further action, 4 Community Watch Groups (CWGs) and 4 youth groups and 2 theatre groups were formed. As a result, the CWGs and parents jointly organized courtyard meetings at Cox's bazar for awareness raising among community people. Training on child protection was imparted to community members and they identified 10 cases of online sexual abuse and sexual harassment child abuse. Immediate steps were taken by the CWGs to protest online sexual exploitation of children. Two victims of online sexual harassment were rescued by the community members. A curriculum on Safe Internet Use for Children was developed and 06 briefing meetings were organized to introduce the hand book to students of formal educational institutions.

Two schools adopted the curriculum to teach their students on safe internet use. The Consortium also arranged meeting for advocacy with ICT service providers and they committed to ensure safe cyber zone for children in their cyber café. One session was organized for local govt. and representatives of several UPs participated. The UP member of Krishna Nagor union of Satkhira took initiative to ensure safe internet and safe service in his area. One consultation was held with Local Government officials that resulted in raising the issue at the quarterly meetings of UPs. The Consortium (ASK and 3 local partner NGOs) completed a Risk and Vulnerability Study and Trend Analysis on online sexual exploitation of children focusing on supply and demand side during this year. The findings of the study were shared with relevant ministries in a roundtable where the State Minister of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications expressed willingness to work together on this issue, which opened a great opportunity to advance the agenda at the policy level. ASK prepared a draft advocacy plan for future direction. The Consortium established communication with South Asian Initiative for Violence against Children (SAIVAC) and End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) for regional cooperation on the issue.

3.6 Institutional Development

ASK's institutional development activities are managed by three strategically important Units, Administration; Accounts, Finance and Planning; and Monitoring and Evaluation (PME). They ensure smooth functioning of the organization.

- a. **The Administration Unit (ADMIN)** provides logistical and infrastructural support to run the organization smoothly and meets all legal and other requirements of the Government and ASK'S Executive Committee. Personnel management is a major responsibility of this Unit.
- b. **The Accounts and Finance (A&F) Unit** manages ASK's finances and accounts. It manages pay roll and funds for implementation of programmes, procurement of services, equipment, supplies and insurance. It is also responsible to report to donors, NGOAB, DC Office and others relating to accounts and finance.
- c. **The Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Unit** prepares project proposals, regularly monitors and evaluates implementation of programme, liaises with donors, prepares reports for GoB, donors, ASK Executive Committee, ASK management and others, provides support to evaluation exercises. It develops and administers tools and instruments for monitoring and supervision and maintains the MIS system.
- d. **The Internal Audit (IA) Unit** has been functioning independently since December 2015 and is functionally reportable to Audit Committee formed by the Executive Committee (EC). It supports examining, evaluating, and reporting to the management of the adequacy and effectiveness of the financial management, accounting and internal control system. It performs two key roles in managing organizational risks, i. ensuring that the organization's risk management system operates effectively, and the strategies implemented are effective in respect of managing operational risks.

Achievements in administration

The following activities were accomplished during 2016:

- Organized 7 Executive Committee Meetings, 6 Director's Meetings, 12 Coordinator's meeting, 5 Administrative meeting and 1 Support Staff meeting.
- Annual General meeting was held on the 19th November where 11 General members attended. The Draft Annual Report 2015, the Operational Plan, Annual Budget of 2017, and the Audit Report of 2015 were presented and approved by the Meeting. Appointment of Auditor for the year 2016 was approved. Election of the Chairperson and the Members of the Executive Committee was held, and a new Executive Committee was formed.
- ASK donor consortium meeting was held on 22 June 2016 with the representatives of donor agencies. The meeting discussed and approved annual report 2015, financial statement of 2015 and the Audit report. Other discussant point was South Asian Association for Transactional Analysis (SAATA) Conference, Next Commitment from Donor Partners and Recruitment of ED, ASK.
- Conducted recruitment process for recruiting 8 staff.
- Orientation training was arranged for the newly appointed staff.
- ASK's security system has been upgraded installing close circuit cameras to monitor visitors and others,

which will cover the entire office soon. Visitors are restricted, and the staff are to complete their tasks within office time. All staff are to liaise with law enforcing agencies during travel and while organizing outdoor meetings.

- ED of ASK participated in national and international conferences, seminars and meetings and participated in different human chains. The ED also attended meetings with foreign delegates, donors agencies and Embassies, District Commissioners and Law Commission Office, and attended TV shows and programmes covering different issues on human rights in different media.

Achievements in Accounts and Finance

The following activities were accomplished during 2016:

- ASK's financial record keeping is done electronically.
- ASK's revised budget was prepared and submitted to the ASK management and respective Donors.
- Global and project audit were completed and submitted to donors, NGOAB and ASK Executive Committee.
- Budget was approved by NGOAB.
- Activity and financial reports prepared for Executive Committee meetings.
- Health and Group Term insurance was extended to staff through Delta Life Insurance company Ltd. In 2016, 13 staff got benefits from Health Insurance Plan and ASK recovered BDT5, 04,002/-
- Correspondence with Donors, Partners, NGOAB and other stakeholders was maintained.
- ASK Finance team attended several seminar, workshop and meetings.
- Staff of Finance unit visited working areas of ASK and prepared report for the management.

Achievements in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

The following activities were accomplished during 2016:

- Prepared bi-annual and annual Country Strategy monitoring reports for donor.
- Twelve reports were submitted to District Deputy Commissioners Office and 4 reports for NGOAB were submitted.
- Revised the existing Project Proposal (2012-16) and Annual Operation Plan and budget of 2016 as per the plan and budget revision of 2016.
- Prepared and submitted bi-annual report of 2016 and annual report of 2015 for consortium donor partners.
- Organizational annual report 2015 (draft) was prepared and submitted to the Annual General Meeting for approval.
- The full Programme Proposal of ASK for 2017-2021 was prepared and got approval from Danish Embassy.
- In 2016, PME staff monitored different programmes of ASK 19 times and prepared monitoring reports and shared with the Executive Director and the concerned Units. PME unit observed the programmes and provided suggestions and feedback about the programmes. Monitoring reports mainly focused on process such as documents, participation in different events, participant's selection, dealings with clients, implementation of operational plan in the field etc. PME also followed up their observations and shared field observations with the PNGOs and CBOs. The PME also tried to understand the monitoring mechanisms and reporting system of the partners NGOs.
- ASK successfully participated in an online monkey survey conducted by SIDA assessment team. About 20 percent of ASK staff have participated in the survey and some partner organisations also took part in it. The Assessment team also had meeting with senior management team of ASK.

Achievements in Internal Audit Unit

The following activities were accomplished during 2016:

- The Internal Auditor visited 17 PNGOs as per the Tentative Internal Audit Plan-2016 and sent the Audit reports to the audited NGOs. Concerned Management of ASK analysed the Audit reports for necessary decisions.
- A trend analysis of Intellectual Services taken by ASK (2011-2015) was also conducted by Internal Auditor of ASK.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE CURRENT PHASE

The current phase of the programme (2012-2016) has achieved the planned progress and ASK has contributed to the HR monitoring, advocacy and action on upholding human rights at the national level. ASK has supported building community and stakeholders' awareness on human rights and the need to promote a culture of upholding HR. Capacity building of stakeholders at multiple levels, providing legal aid and support services comprising mediation, litigation, protests, and appeals were the key activities of ASK. Other services included shelters, psycho-social counselling for victims of HR violence. The overall achievements are summarised below.

Goal of the Completed Phase

Human rights (HR) situation in Bangladesh has significantly improved.

Specific Objective 1

By 2016, HR standards and mechanisms are increasingly applied by the wider civil society.

Outcome 1.1

- By 2016, HR actors in the working area are more capable to ensure HR standards as well as gender and social justice for disempowered people.

Achievement: A total of 1,70,857 (Female-1,01,913 and Male- 68,944) PNGOs staff, CBOs, lawyers were made aware of human rights and they continue to take actions in case of human rights violation (HRV). Through 4,785 drama shows, 63 theatre festivals, 5 wall magazine festivals and 414 day celebration events, HRA programme reached to 21,75,000 (approx.) people. Among them 8,68,835 people were made aware of human rights standards and mechanisms. A total of 3,495 (Female-2,292 & Male-1,203) human right actors were trained on defending human rights and about 60 percent of them are proactively working in the community. In 48 unions CBOs are proactively supporting the disempowered people in claiming their rights. A total of 1,890 recorded incidents of violence against women were addressed (take victims to Thana, hospital, court, lawyers and providing legal remedy). Fifty two schools adopted HR education as co-curricular activities.

Specific Objective 2

By 2016, access to justice for disempowered people is enhanced.

Outcome 2.1

- By 2016, access to legal aid services have increased for disempowered people.

Achievement: During the period ASK provided legal aid services to different groups of people through its own layers and panel lawyers.

- 64,055 people addressed through legal aid services.
- 6,060 cases conducted by ASK lawyers on behalf of survivors.
- 2,601 women and children got access to psycho-social counselling and shelter.
- 2,179 clients got access to psychosocial counselling.
- 322 clients with 100 children received halfway shelter support.
- 3,473 persons (3,154 women and 319 men) addressed through outreach legal aid programme in seven districts of Bangladesh.
- 20,243 persons (20,109 women and 134 men) got access to justice system which is an increase by 75 percent compared to 2010.

- ASK responded 93 percent complaints out of from 20,243 requests effectively.
- 3,098 victims of violence (women and children) were supported through rapid response.

Specific Objective 3

- By 2016, the accountability of the state to ensure HR standards is enhanced.

Outcome 3.1

By 2016, the overall HR situation was systematically monitored and findings were disseminated nation-wide.

- ASK's Documentation Unit scanned 9 daily newspapers and prepared 1,104 statistical charts and cumulative charts. The findings were disseminated at the daily action meeting for action. ASK disseminated HRV reports to print and electronic media for awareness of the stakeholders on human rights situation.
- Four Annual HR Reports were published and disseminated widely. These have been used by HR organizations at the national and international levels.
- A total of 775 HRVs were investigated by ASK and HRDs and progress monitored in 178 HRVS and findings are made accessible in nation-wide.

Outcome 3.2

- By 2016, GoB is increasingly engaged to improve the HR situation through legal reforms and actions.

Achievements

- Two new laws (Domestic Workers Protection and Registration Act and Slum Dwellers Resettlement Act) were drafted and proposed to the concerned authorities and stakeholders.
- Assisted PNGOs, NHRC Task force in the community to send 49 complaints to NHRC.
- Involved NHRC with the grassroots people in a meeting for formation of taskforce formation and conducted training on methods of conducting fact finding and filing complaints. ASK also sent 195 memorandums to the concerned authorities in 2012. The NHRC was also involved in the publication of a handbook on complaint procedure. The NHRC published 10 thousand copies of the handbook.
- Published and shared ANNI Report 2013-15 of Bangladesh Chapter to the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) every year.
- Regularly shares information regarding HRVs (e.g extra-judicial killings, attacks on minorities, political violence, violations of freedom of expression and other information) with international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Forum-Asia and such others and responded their queries.
- Shared HR related information with the Foreign Missions in Dhaka and sent communications and information on the UN human rights mechanism.
- Informal interactions with the UN Special Rapporteurs on HR issues were also organized. As a result, the UN Mechanism and international organizations as well as networks are responding on the violations of HRs in Bangladesh. The president of UNHRC and other Special Rapporteurs including the International organizations issued several statements condemning or protesting the violations of rights in Bangladesh and urged the Government to take immediate actions upon receipt of information from ASK.
- In 2012, two communications were sent to the Special Rapporteur, one on Freedom of Religion or Belief, on the incident of torture on Buddhist community in Ramu, Cox's Bazaar. Another one to the Special rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, summary and arbitrary executions based on the incident of Limon Hossain, a student of Barisal who was shot by the police. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued press note expressing concern about political violence, that had led to deaths, injury and disruption prior to the 2014 elections.
- International media like BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, Washington Post, Guardian, New York Times, the Economist, and Times of India etc. are reporting news regularly on crossfire or encounter, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) trial process, disappearance of opposition leader Ilias Ali and garments labour leader Aminul Islam, and the influx of Rohinga refugees with priority. The issues have been flagged by ASK as well.
- The Government has submitted its UPR report on 21 January 2013. NHRC has submitted their Report on October 2012.

Specific Objective 4

By 2016, the rights of working children are promoted.

Outcome 4.1

- By 2016, access of working children to education, health, and social protection services have increased.

Achievement: The rights of 8,631 working children's access to education, health and social protection has been ensured. They are enjoying their basic rights in a child friendly environment.



Rally on International Human Rights Day



Tribute to Martyrs on Intellectual Day

CURRENT CHALLENGES

As discussed earlier in Section 2, there exist many threats to human rights and violation is frequent. The diversity and intensity of HRV has aggravated over time. The situation poses challenges to the HR activities as to how to combat the HRVs. ASK is to face the challenges as well. For ASK there are two types of challenges, external and internal.

The external challenges relate to the intensified HRVs and their types, and the corruption and inaction from the state agencies. The rise of fundamentalist forces, as evident from the reported incidences poses additional threats to HR situation. Aggravation of VAW and VAC coupled with the lengthy process of legal resolution and the culture of impunity provide additional challenges to the community as well as to organizations like ASK. Due to giving shelter of criminals under politically influential people, violation of laws and such other issues, the role of organizations like ASK has become more important. For ASK the challenge is to provide timely and prompt support for access to justice to the victims as well as to facilitate quicker judgements. In the recent past a new challenge to HR has emerged. The influx of Rohingya community from Myanmar to Bangladesh has not only created additional demand for services related to food, health or income but also HR violation has been evident. Therefore, services and advocacy by organizations like ASK has also become important.

Internal challenges- ASK has been implementing a multi-faceted development programme supported by a consortium donors: Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE), Royal Danish Embassy, Swedish Development Agency, Embassy of Switzerland, NETZ-Germany and Oxfam Novib. During the phase (2012 to 2016) the total budget was BDT 780,439,816 for implementing the programme. In year 2016, ASK has faced financial crisis and the two main reasons were loss due to reduced foreign currency exchange rate and another issue was one of the consortium partner, RNE changed their financial commitment at the end of the year and was not able to disburse the full committed amount. This situation forced ASK to curtail the targets and budget of 2016 and accordingly the whole programme proposal was revised in May, 2016.

Since the end of 2015, ASK has started preparing the programme proposal for the next phase (2017-2021). ASK was expecting that the existing donor partners will continue their support for the next phase. However, unexpectedly, RNE, the major donor of ASK core funding, informed ASK that they were not able to continue their financial support to ASK after 2016 due to policy decisions and priorities made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo. NETZ-Germany also was not able to commit for its support. ASK became vulnerable to some extent and ASK's senior management worked out and revised the proposal several times drastically reducing the estimated budget plan by 60% compared to that of the current phase. ASK started searching for new donor funding. In the recent years, most of the donors are not interested to support for service delivery related activities and they are showing their interest in advocacy related activities.

This not only is curtailing of ASK's activities, but it also means reduction in essential services for the poor disempowered and vulnerable people from ASK, which were being provided for a long time. At the beginning of 2016, the Executive Director of ASK suddenly stepped down from her position, which created a challenge for ASK to find out a suitable leader for the organization. A large number of experienced and highly motivated staff had to be terminated who were the major contributors to the achievements of ASK. It also created lack of trust, doubt and misunderstanding among the staff and on organizational governance.

ANNEXURE

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

A. WAHAB & CO.
Chartered Accountants

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)
Statement of Financial Position
As at December 31, 2016

Particulars	Notes	Strengthening Activism Towards HR Culture in Bangladesh	Sexual Exploitation of Children Online in Travel & Tourism	Monitoring Child Rights Situation in Bangladesh	General Fund	2016	2015
Assets:							
Non-current Assets:		6,948,090	-	-	34,927,815	41,875,905	45,884,712
Property Plant & Equipments	3	6,948,090	-	-	34,927,815	41,875,905	45,884,712
Current Assets:		397,545	1,674,728	136,030	47,692,629	49,900,932	161,891,632
Advance & Security Deposit	4	-	-	-	400,000	400,000	2,746,665
Membership Subscription	5	-	-	-	2,600	2,600	1,800
Stock of Stationeries	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund Receivable	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Advance	8	-	4,000	-	-	4,000	-
Cash & Bank Equivalents	9	397,545	1,670,728	136,030	47,290,029	49,494,332	159,143,167
Total		7,345,635	1,674,728	136,030	82,620,445	91,776,838	207,776,343
Equity & Liabilities:		7,056,251	1,593,728	136,030	82,613,678	91,399,687	204,089,865
Capital Fund	10	7,056,251	1,593,728	-	79,377,022	88,027,001	159,186,466
Gratuity Fund	11	-	-	-	-	-	44,903,400
Project Fund		-	-	136,030	3,236,656	3,372,686	-
Current Liabilities:		289,384	81,000	-	6,767	377,151	3,686,477
Liability for Expenses	12	289,384	81,000	-	3,967	374,351	2,816,434
Loan from ASK General Fund		-	-	-	-	-	867,543
Advance Membership Subscription	13	-	-	-	2,800	2,800	2,500
Total		7,345,635	1,674,728	136,030	82,620,445	91,776,838	207,776,343

The accompanying notes from an integral part of the financial statements.


Executive Director


Director (Finance and Admin)

Subject to our separate report of even date

Dated: Dhaka, July 12, 2017


(A. WAHAB & CO.)
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS


ASK: SUPPORT SYSTEM

	Number of Unit-Supported CBOs	Working Areas
HRA	Biddalaya Nattya Dal (BNAD): 52 Manobadhikar Nattaya Parishad (MNP): 13	13 Districts
GSJ	Manobadhikar Songrokkhan Parishad (MSP): 10 Manobadhikar Nari Samaj (MNS): 10 Manobadhikar Ainjibi Parishad (MAP): 10	10 Districts
Outreach Unit	Lawyers Forum: 7	7 Districts
Investigation Unit	Human Rights Defenders Forum: 20	20 Districts (Unit itself conducts investigations in all districts)

LOCATION OF BNADS: SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

Dhaka: Dhanmondi Kachikantha High School, Rayer Bazar High School, Lalmatia Girl's School, Ali Hossain High School.

Gazipur: Harinal High School, Mofizuddin High School, Razia Sultana Girls High School, Neelerpara High School, Gazipur.

Gaibandha: Sadhinotar Rojot Joyonti Girls High School, Rebeka Habib Girls High School, Tulshighat Kashinath High School, N.H Modern High School.

Jhenaidah: Shisukunja School & College, Jheinaidah S.P. Secondary School, Shaheed Smrity Bidyapith, Jheinaidah Wazir Ali High School & College.

Joypurhat: Khanjanpur Mission Girls High School, Joypurhat Girls High School, Dogachhi High School, Kasiabari High School.

Kishoreganj: Arjot Atorjan High School, Ajimuddin High School, Kishoreganj Girls High School, Zilla Shoroni Girls High School.

Kushtia: Kolokakoli Secondary School, Mohini Mohon Biddyapith, Milpara Secondary School, Kushtia High School.

Mymensingh: Mymensing Laboratory High School, Premier Ideal School, The Edward Institution, Mohila Udayan Samiti High School.

Naogaon: Central Girls High School, P.M. Girls High School, Morchula Girls High School, Jonokollan Model High School.

Netrokona: Jahanara Smrity High School, Rajur Bazar Collegiate School, Netrokona Adorsho Girls High School, Dotto High School.

Pabna: Jannat Bibi Jubily Girls High School, Central Girls High School, Selim Najir High School, Shaheed Fazlul Haque Powra High School.

Sirajganj: Victoria High School, Sabuj Kanon High School, Kowmi Jute Mill High School, Hoimobala Girls School.

Tangail: Tangail Shibnath High School, Bibekananda High School and College, Tangail Girls School, Dighulia Shaheed Mizanur Rahman High School.

PARTNER NGOS: 21

Barisal: Association of Voluntary Action for Society (AVAS).

Bogra: Program for Eco-Social Development (PESD).

Chittagong: Organisation for Women's Development in Bangladesh (OWDEB).

Gaibandha Sadar: Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK).

Hobigonj: Hobigonj Unnayan Sangsta (HUS).

Jhenaidah Sadar: Welfare Efforts (WE).

Joypurhat Sadar: National Development Council (NDC).

Kushtia Sadar: Mukti Nari o Shishu Unnayan Shangstha.

Kishoregonj: Peoples Oriented Program Implementation (POPI).

Mymensing Sadar: Social Association for Rural Advancement (SARA).

Naogaon Sadar: Ancholic Palli Unnayan Sangstha (APUS).

Netrakona Sadar: Shabolomby Unnayan Samity (SUS).

Pabna Sadar: Pabna Prostisruti (PP).

Rajshahi: Barendra Unnayan Prochesta (BUP).

Rajshahi: Mohila Sanghati Parishad (MSP).

Rajshahi: Association for Community Development (ACD).

Sirajganj Sadar: Socio Health And Rehabilitation Program (SHARP).

Sathkhira: Society for Development and Education of Small Household (SoDESH),

Sathkhira: Agrogoti Sangstha (AS).

Tangail: Rural Poor Development Organization (RPDO).

Cox's Bazar: MUKTI.

DONOR PARTNERS: 8

Donor Consortium

- The Royal Norwegian Embassy, Dhaka
- The Swedish Embassy, Dhaka
- NETZ-Germany
- Danish Embassy
- Embassy of Switzerland

Individual Donor

- Save the Children International
- Terre des Hommes, Netherlands
- Zubaan

LEGAL AID CLINICS IN DHAKA: 11

- Mirpur
- Johnson Road
- Goran
- Kamrangichar
- Keraniganj
- Dhalpur at Jatrabari
- Victim Support Centre (VSC) at Tejgaon
- Hemayetpur (Savar)
- Gazipur with Department of Women Affairs Shelter Home
- Berri Bandh at Mohammadpur
- Azampur Legal clinic, Uttara

Centres for Providing Support to Children

Type of Centre	In Dhaka	Outside Dhaka (Run by PNGOs)
Drop in Centres	6	-
Socialization Centre	2	6

NATIONAL NETWORKS

Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum (BSAF)

170 member organisations to campaign for the implementation of the Child Rights Convention.

Beijing plus Five for Women's Rights

A coalition of women's organizations to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Government of Bangladesh.

Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP)

Coordinates campaigns for the right to shelter of slum dwellers and mobilizes them to demand their rights.

Citizen's Initiative on CEDAW

A network of 38 organizations formed in 2007 to prepare reports for the UN CEDAW Committee and to campaign for implementation of CEDAW.

Citizen's Initiatives to Address Domestic Violence (CIDV)

A network of 40 organizations formed in 2007 for advocacy on legislation for Domestic Violence.

Child Rights Governance Assembly (CRGA)

A civil society advocacy network of 22 organizations including children and youth organizations.

Human Rights Forum, Bangladesh (HRFB)

A national platform of 19 non-governmental organisations working to protect and promote human rights in Bangladesh. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) having UNECOSOC consultative status took the initiative to form this forum and has been working as the Secretariat of the Forum since inception.

Sramik Nirapotta Forum (SNF)

A network of 14 organizations concerned with safety at the workplace and workers' health. Formed after the collapse of the Spectrum Sweater Industries building in Savar it has campaigned for workers' safety through the media, and filed PILs to establish corporate responsibility for workers' deaths and injuries.

Samajik Protirodh Committee

A network of 52 women's groups formed to resist violence against women by both state and non-state actors, to campaign for participation of women in public decision-making and to resist the rise of religious extremism. The Secretariat is located in the Bangladesh Mahila Porishod.

The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh

A civil society network which is working to promote child rights.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Formed after the Nairobi Conference. Based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, APWLD networks with legal and women's rights organisations across Asia and the Pacific to campaign for women's rights, to create awareness of rights and to draft recommendations for legal reform.

Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

A network of human rights organisations as well as defenders engaged with National Human Rights Institutions in Asia, to ensure the accountability of these bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights. It was formed on December 2006 to strengthen domestic human rights protection mechanisms in accordance with international human rights standards.

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International)

Works against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Member NGOs in 70 countries and the secretariat is in Bangkok.

FORUM-ASIA (FA)

A membership-based human rights organisation "committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights including the right to development" which has 46 member organizations from 17 countries across Asia.

International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP)

The only regional/international NGO working with the CEDAW Convention as a main tool for change in the Asia Pacific as well as in filling gap between the promise of women's rights and their actual realisation.

Migrants' Forum in Asia (MFA)

Raises awareness about migrant workers' rights and fair working conditions and creates structures of support. Secretariat located in Manila.

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR)

A democratic regional network with a large membership base of people committed to addressing human rights issues at both national and regional levels. SAHR's basic policy is to identify the gaps in regional initiatives and to undertake activities which do not duplicate the work carried out by other regional or national NGOs.

South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR)

A regional public forum for the promotion of respect for universal values of human rights, the independence of rights and the invisibility of rights based in Kathmandu.

We Can End Violence against Women

an international campaign against domestic violence. Holds meetings, seminars, workshops and publishes materials on violence against women and personal and collective measures to prevent gender based violence. ASK is currently Chair of the national committee.

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)

An international solidarity network that engages with problems faced by women under Islamic laws.

British Association of Counseling and Psycho-therapy (BACP)

It is a professional body, membership organization that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapist, clients of therapy.

ASK MEMBERS

Founder Members

Late Mr. Aminul Haq
 Late Barrister Salma Sobhan
 Late Justice K. M. Subhan
 Late Advocate Abdul Khaleque
 Sir Fazle Hasan Abed
 Dr. Hameeda Hossain
 Ms. Khursheed Erfan Ahmed
 Ms. Taherunnessa Abdullah
 Barrister Amirul Islam

Executive Committee Members

Taherunnessa Abdullah (Chairperson)
 Advocate Z. I. Khan Panna
 Sultana Kamal (Ex-Officio up to March, 2016)
 Barrister Nihad Kabir
 Tahmina Rahman (Treasurer)
 Barrister Sara Hossain
 Advocate Md. Asaduzzaman
 Ms. Rokshana Khondokar
 Ms. Fatema Rashid Hasan
 Md. Nur Khan (Ex-Officio from April, 2016)

General Members

Afsana Wahab
 Dilruba Shahana
 Dr. Faustina Pereira
 Fatema Rashid Hasan
 Isaac Robinson
 Khurshid Alam
 Karunamoy Chakma
 Dr. Meghna Guha Thakurta
 Advocate Md. Asaduzzaman
 Md. Nur Khan
 Barrister Nihad Kabir
 Neela Matin
 Roushan Jahan Parvin
 Rokshana Khondokar
 Roushan Jahan
 Sultana Kamal
 Barrister Sara Hossain
 Shameem Akhtar
 Sayed Mahbubar Rahman
 Tahmina Rahman
 Tanzina Huq Tiru
 Advocate Z. I. Khan Panna
 Zaved Hasan Mahmood

ASK Team

Executive Director

Sultana Kamal, (up to 3rd March, 2016)

Executive Director (Acting)

Md. Nur Khan, (April-December, 2016)

Human Rights Awareness Unit

Motahar Uddin Akand (Sr. Deputy Director), Md. Jahedul Alam (Sr. Coordinator), Jaganmoy Paul, Mst. Sheuli Khatun, Solnara Aktar, Mahmuda Akter Munni, Md. Solaiman Hossain, Md. Mominul Islam, Md. Mashrurul Belal.

Gender and Social Justice Unit

Sanaiyya Faheem Ansari (Sr. Deputy Director), Sitara Shamim, Taufiq Al Mannan (Sr. Coordinator), Mahbubul Alam, Apurba Kumar Das, Dil Afroz Akter, Emran Hossen, Tasnova Alam, Asaduzzaman Newton.

Mediation & Rapid Response Unit

Asma Khanom Ruba, Kuheli Sultana, Nina Goswami (Sr. Deputy Director), Nahid Shams, Selina Akhter (Sr. Coordinator), Shithi Rani Das, Shilpi Saha, Shamsun Nahar, Sumita Bagchi, Mahmuda Khatun Maya, Parul Akhter, Dil Afroz Islam, Shirina Akhter, Suraiya Parvin, Dilara Momtaj Moni, Shanta Ahmed, Ayesha Begum, Kaniz Sharmin, Nipa Monalisa.

Litigation Unit

Salma Jabin (Deputy Director), Abdur Rashid, Farhana Afroj, Mizanur Rahman, Momtaj Begum, Nasrin Akter, Snigdha Saha, Topan Kumar Sarker, Ataulah Nurul Kabir, Maksuel Chakma, Asadur Zaman, Rumana Farah, Ayesha Islam (Field Worker).

Outreach Unit

Dilip Kumar Paul (Deputy Director), Rehana Sultana, Md. Shahinuzzaman, Md. Mostafizur Rahman, Rahnuma Sharmin, Proma Israt, Md. Kamruzzaman, Amrita Sarkar.

Support Service and Half Way Home Unit

Roushan Jahan Pervin (Sr. Deputy Director), Arpita Rani Das (Asst. Coordinator), Syeda Parvez Khanam, Rokeya Begum, Maleka Begum, Mary Baroi, Morzina Akhter Beauty, Mollica Bhattachariya (part-time).

Child Rights Unit (Consortium)

Gita Chakraborty (Sr. Deputy Director), Nargis Akhter (Sr. Coordinator), Meheraj Jahan, Jahan Ara Pervin, Mina Sanyal, Shamsun Nahar Shewly, Ali Akram Tarafder, Kamrun Nessa, Atia Afrin, Rehana Pervin, Nargis Akter Mafia, Shahana Sultana, Lutfunnessa, Nahida Sultana Poly, Hasina Nazneen Sathi, Sayeda Nupur, Umme Kulsum Akter Parvin, Anjuman Hossain, Rita Parven.

Child Rights Unit (Monitoring child rights situation in Bangladesh)

Rasheda Akter (Coordinator).

Child Rights Unit (Sexual Exploitation of Children Online and in Travel and Tourism)

Ambica Roy (Coordinator), Asadujman (coordinator), Tamanna Hoq Riti (Asst. Coordinator), Mohsena Begum, Sahmmi Akther Ruma, Nazma Akther, Ferdousi, Nurunnahar Begum, Sadika Jinat Banu (Accounts)

Psycho-Social Counseling

Nasima Akter (Coordinator), Shaheen Islam (Advisor), Runa Khandakar, Sheikh Zadi Rezina Parvin, Sunzida Islam.

Investigation Unit

Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir, Anirban Saha, John Asit Das, Mohammed Tipu Sultan (Sr. Deputy Director), Topote Bhattacharjee, Md. Mahabub Alam, Md. Liakat Ali, Mahmuda Ridia Roshni.

Documentation Unit

Fahmida Zaman, Fatema Zannati, Jharna Khanam, Nargis Akhter, Zafreen Sattar (Sr. Coordinator).

Publication & Communication Unit

Kaniz Khadija Surovy, Shaheen Akhtar (Sr. Editor), Samir Karmakar.

Media & International Advocacy Unit

Md. Ashik Ahmed, Aklima Ferdows Lisa, Kamrujjahan Flora, Md. Amanatullah, Ishrat Ashtary, Md. Modaschhir Rahman, Rakibul Hasan.

Legal Advocacy and Policy Reform Unit

Abu Obaidur Rahman (Sr. Deputy Director), Abantee Nurul, Mahjabin Rabbani, Md. Samiul Alam Sarker, Nurul Islam, Farjana Boby Mitu.

Training Unit

Tanvia Roselin Sultana (Coordinator), Momy Monzury Chowdhury, Tasmin Akter, Md. Sajjid Ahmed, Moshfec Ara, Mousumi Megdalena Chisim, Dewan Moniruzzaman, Mochaddik Hossain, Shovon Shahriar, Rokshana Parvin, Tonoy Roy.

Administration Unit

Md. Moqsud Maleque (Deputy Director), Mahmuda Sultana, Shirin Aktar, Tahsina Ahmed, Sabina Yeasmin, Md. Rakibul Hasan, Md. Haider Ali, Fazila Begum, Md. Mohshin Ali, Nur E. Alam, Zahera Begum, Md. Sekander Ali, Mosharaf Hossain, Anil Chandra Mandal, Mariam Begum, Md. Abu Musa, Mintu Barua, Rizwanul Haq, Abedul Moula, Khokon Gomez, Nurun Nahar Rekha, Amena Begum, Fatema Begum, Laily Begum, Laila Begum, Majeda Begum, Anjoli Baroi, Mst. Nilufa, Md. Moshraf Hossain, Md. Farukur Rahman, Mahbub Alam, Nazmul Hossain, Mahfuzur Rahman.

Accounts & Finance Unit

Md. Mustafizur Rahman (Director, Finance and Accounts), Tahera Begum, Ishtiaq Ahmed, Tamanna Nasrin, Paymelia Saha, Masuma Parvin, Mohammad Nazrul Islam, Shamim Hossain.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit

Fatema Mahmuda (Sr. Deputy Director), Ibne Sayed Md. Noor Zaman (Asst. Coordinator), Humaira Khanum (Monitoring Organizer), Suhel Ahmed (Monitoring Organizer).

Internal Audit Unit

Nikolas Biswas (Internal Auditor)

SPONSORS OF WORKING CHILDREN: 2016

No	Children Name	Name of Sponsor
1.	Rubel	Zafreen Sattar
2.	Jannatul	Ad. Nahid Shams
3.	Lucky Akhter	Nina Goswami
4.	Hanif	Khairul Islam
5.	Sabina Akter Dolly	Patrizia Heidegger
6.	Suborna	Patrizia Heidegger
7.	Shahanaz Parveen Shilpi	Patrizia Heidegger
8.	Sajeda Akhter	Patrizia Heidegger
9.	Jakir Hossain	Patrizia Heidegger
10.	Shanta	Patrizia Heidegger
11.	Bipasha Rani Gosh	Mr. Tariq Ali
12.	Priyanka Rani Gosh	Mr. Tariq Ali
13.	Ruma Rani Gosh	Mr. Tariq Ali
14.	Suma Rani Gosh	Mr. Tariq Ali
15.	Sharif	Trade Vision
16.	Mahamuda	Trade Vision
17.	Farzana	Trade Vision
18.	Khadiza	Trade Vision
19.	Nasrin Sultana Swarna	Trade Vision and Ad. Salma Jabin
20.	Shahanaj	Trade Vision
21.	Shathi Chowdary	Dia & Duncan Roger Hall
22.	Taniya Akter	Dia & Duncan Roger Hall
23.	Fahima and Khadiza	Dia & Duncan Roger Hall
24.	Al-Amin	Zahirul Islam
25.	Rehana	Zahirul Islam
26.	Shathi	Zahirul Islam
27.	Amir Hossain	Vivek Group, Mr. Xavier S. Biswas and Mr. Tariq Ali
28.	Rubina Akter	Vivek Group, Mr. Xavier S. Biswas
29.	Laboni	Vivek Group, Mr. Xavier S. Biswas
30.	Rozina	Vivek Group, Mr. Xavier S. Biswas
31.	Nasrin	Vivek Group, Mr. Xavier S. Biswas
32.	Fahima	Zahanara Mridha
33.	Taniya	Zahanara Mridha
34.	Bristi	Zahanara Mridha
35.	Laboni	Zahanara Mridha
36.	Akhi	Zahanara Mridha
37.	Mahamuda	Zahanara Mridha
38.	Soniya	Asrafun Hossain